Charles Cameron Cate

My Father's Memoir of World War I

My father Joseph Clifton ("Clif") Ramsdell Cate was born to Arthur W. and Maedytha E. Cate in Dover, New Hampshire, on October 2nd, 1898 (not a year earlier, as his Canadian Attestation papers attest. But then, in 1917, one had to be 19 years old to enlist, didn't one?). During his 18th year he had already enlisted in (and been discharged from) the U.S. Army. Pausing only to attend the marriage of his mother Mae to Herbert White, he then traveled to Canada to join yet another army. (Mention of that wedding is of interest only in that he left behind a new family that included two young step-sisters, Syd and Dotty, of about nine and five years, respectively.) On returning to Belmont, Massachusetts 21 months later, he was met by the then seven-year old Dotty who escorted the ex-soldier to their new home into which the family had moved while he was "in the Field" with the C.E.F.

Going on eight years later, Clif Cate finally finished writing his WWI memoirs and dedicated them to that "other" step-sister, Elizabeth, his soon to be "P-W" (Precious-Wife)—and, my mother. The years passed. Our family grew to five, the crushing depression wreaked its particular havoc, war threatened again, the once almost fairy tale union that was Clif and Syd dissolved and new unions formed.

Never able to completely detach himself from the "soldier's life," Clif Cate became active in the Massachusetts National Guard, moved up through the ranks, and received his commission as 2nd Lt. assigned to the 26th Division, Service Co., 104th Infantry, on July 13, 1933. When all units of the 26th Division were ordered into active service on January 16,1941, 1st Lt. Cate was among those who reported. Stateside duty saw him promoted to Captain-Infantry (March 18, 1941),

Major-Infantry (June 4, 1942), and on June 22, 1943, to Lt/Colonel—Infantry, the rank he held when relieved from active duty in July, 1944.

He established and operated a hardware store for several years in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, until retiring to the Lake Winnipesaukee, New Hampshire region, which had been his family's ancestral seat for nine or ten generations. In South Effingham, New Hampshire, he became Town Clerk and an active member of the fire and police departments. The South Effingham Fire Dept. building bears a dedication in his memory in recognition of his many civic contributions. Surviving him are three daughters and a son not one of whom ever heard him speak much of his experience in the Great War, except in vague or much abbreviated terms.

It was not until after my father's death that his "Notes" and the "Kit Bag" full of his souvenirs came into my possession, and then my own life was so full of what I thought were more important things that it was years more before I gave these artifacts their most deserved attention. I have embraced them now and marvel at the tour-de-force effort my father's original manuscript demanded (hand typed at four ms. pages per sheet, collated into folded sections, *with over 40 miniature pen and ink drawings, sketches, cartoons, and maps—some in full color* painstakingly placed in and around the text), and can scarcely hold back my sadness knowing that the wonderment, the questions that I might have asked, want still to ask, can never be properly expressed or satisfied, victims really, of lives moving on too quickly, of children who may not even have known what questions to ask, and of fathers too busy to listen. And, I wonder... have I talked enough of such things... with my sons? The story that follows is Clif Cate's. I have included about 40 percent of the original "Notes," corrected some of the typos, misspellings, and here and there (but not in all cases) made a grammatical change. For the experience this work has given me, I remain thoroughly humbled by and grateful to the author, and am pleased to finally have the opportunity to share his words with his family and friends.

The source for many of my father's statistical and historical facts was *Europe Since Waterloo*, William Stearns Davis, The Century Company, New York, 1926. An invaluable source of text and maps allowing me to trace the movements of the 12th Battery across France and Belgium was *Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914—1919, Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War*, Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.; Roger Duhamel, F.R.S.C., Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, Ottawa, 1962.

Charles Cameron Cate was born in Springfield, Massachusetts on October 19, 1934. He first observed military life in Alabama during WWII while his father was

stationed at Camp Rucker and later, at Fort McClellan. After a brief flirtation with college, he too opted out of his Reserve unit and entered active military service from 1953 to 1956, serving in Military Police units in Fort Benning, Georgia, and for a time in Italy, Austria, and Berlin, Germany. He eventually completed his interrupted education attending the University of Massachusetts and West Virginia University, and enjoyed a career in the biomedical research communities at Dartmouth Medical School, Hanover, New Hampshire, and the nearby VA Hospital in White River Junction, Vermont. Retired, he now lives with his wife by the sea on the Southern Maine Coast.

Clifton J. Cate, Ex-member of the C.E.F.

A Soldier's Memoir of World War I

"N O T E S"

To: Elizabeth F. White
Belmont, Massachusetts

My dear "P-W":

Seventeen years ago in Dover, New Hampshire, I knew a man who had been a soldier in the Union Army during the Civil War. He was eighty years of age and looked older—certainly everything about him suggested the late winter of life. Wrinkled, withered, crippled, almost deaf and blind, unable to talk above a whisper and even then one had to sense the thought he tried to express... Trembling, tottering, on the brink of his grave, yet he lived, for there was one spark within his life that refused to retire—or retreat. Heart, soul, and body he was a Union soldier. The thought of it brought life into his eyes, expression into his face, a semblance of strength into his body and he would show a young friend the livid scar that was caused by hot, jagged metal as a shell-splinter all but tore away his right side in battle—all of fifty years before. Then he would tell "his" story of the war as though it had just happened. It was very interesting to a twelve year old boy. Listening, thrilled, I wondered how anyone could remember so many things so clearly after so many years.

In 1917-18-19, I learned the manner in which war is burned into the memory of a soldier and now know how one remembers. Once a soldier—always a soldier. As I tell you "my" story of the war you listen so patiently and seem so interested I almost forget that I am talking as much to unburden myself as to please you. These typewritten sheets constitute, more-or-less, "my" story and are written because of the great advantage friend "book" has over friend "human"; the story may be turned on or off as you will.

The war had been going on for thirty-two months before the United States entered and I enlisted. Almost another year rolled by before I saw "action". Thus

you see, my part in the war was a small matter. As a soldier in the line I gave my best as did many millions of others. Out of the line I broke rules and bent regulations enough to make the good old Sergeant-Major shed tears of anguish and cry, "That damned Yankee!" His great stock of patience held out, however, and I never saw the inside of the guardhouse except as a guard on duty.

Part of my experience was not beneficial to me, but the balance of pleasure was worth the price. Though I intend to "read" about the wars of the future I am not sorry to have been a part of the last one. Much enjoyment, some hard work, has been derived from the preparing of these "Notes". I hope that my efforts to please you succeed.

As ever,

C.J.C.

Belmont, January 26, 1927.

[Concerned that the most just of all wars might be over before he would have an opportunity to participate, 17-year old Clifton J. Cate, of Sharon, Massachusetts, having already been denied in one attempt to enlist for service at the Mexican border in the summer of 1916, returned to school in a troubled state of mind. "...ought the United States enter the war? Would I be accepted to fight for America when the time came? Would I remain at home when my pals were proving their right to citizenship in France?" Talk of going to Canada to enlist was common during the winter of 1916-17 while Uncle Sam was fast reaching a decision which would soon make all those questions moot, and which was soon to affect the life of every American. One week after the United States declared war on Germany Clif Cate, now 18, tried to enlist but was told to return in a month. Then on May 13, 1917, he and a friend entered Commonwealth Armory in Allston, Massachusetts as civilians, but came out as privates (stretcher-bearers) in the First Massachusetts Ambulance Corps. For three months life in the army consisted of a series of casual training days and, often, nights at home. In August the Federal Army took charge and the recruit's first real physical exam resulted in Pvt. Cate being released from the service by way of a medical discharge that read, "by reason of physical disability—no teeth upper jaw". Frustrated yet once again in his attempt to "get into the fray", Clif Cate, on advice from the British Mission in Boston, purchased a ticket to Fredericton, New Brunswick, via St. John and on the 8th of September, 1917, left for Canada. While on the way the boat stopped for a time at Eastport, Maine, where on reflecting that there was a possibility of his never coming back from France, he went ashore for a possible last walk on American soil. Excerpts from his account of history from then on follow: CCC]

Before

On May 7th in 1915, a German submarine sank the mighty Lusitania, with a loss of 1152 lives including 102 Americans. From the moment of reading the unpleasant news I felt that the United States should enter the war on the side of the Allies. The President could not make his notes too drastic. Daily, growing more impatient all the time, I followed the reports from the battlefields .

In the fall of 1915 I returned to Sharon High School where I met Cann, Meister, Nelson and other boys of the upper classes who were following the war very carefully. Studies and sports were often forgotten in spirited debates—how soon the end—on whom rested the guilt of origin—what value the war—President Wilson's attitude—and hundreds of other subjects. To the question, "Ought the United States enter NOW?" there was but one voice in the negative. How little we knew the price of glory!

In the summer of '16 I found Grandfather Cate more than a little interested in the war. Blind—his information had to come through the kindness of those about him, but his intuition was rare. Our long talks have since become treasured memo-

ries. The grand old man of East Alton told me many things, the full significance of which came to me after the war. Groping in eternal darkness he had discovered truths lost to many great men with two good eyes.

Later, in '16, Uncle Sam told me to "go on back to school where you belong" when I tried to enlist for service at the Mexican Border. That troubled me—would I be accepted to fight for America when the time came?

The United States Army

The United States declared war on Germany April 6, 1917. On the thirteenth, I tried to enlist but was told to return in a month. On May 13th, Norman Cann (who later received several decorations and won his sergeant's stripes in France), and I entered Commonwealth Armory in Allston as civilians, but came out as privates (stretcher-bearers) in the First Massachusetts Ambulance Corps. "Private C.J. Cate, Regimental Number 120" sounded rather pleasant to me. I began to feel the importance of the occasion, as the following extract from a letter to Grandmother Allard indicates:

Sharon, Mass.
May 6, 1917

My darling Grandma:

...This war <u>is</u> a terrible thing, it is just what Sherman said it was. My belief is that the harder the fighting nations go at it now, the sooner the war will end, and God will put things right again—for good.

As expected, as the Bible says, altho not directly, this great country of ours <u>did</u> get into it. It is a case of war between Democracy and Aristocracy, rule without military forces, and rule with military forces. The result will be as the Bible says, a genuine Democracy, a real rule without military forces and thence without war. Therefore the quickest way for this long looked for rule to come, is for every American, in fact every ally of the democratic powers, to go into this thing, however terrable it sounds and is, and do his or her part by joining one of the three armies. —

I The one in khaki, who gives his life,

II The one in overalls who gives his labor,

III And the one in silks who gives his money.

In my honest opinion and belief the one to join the first is the man from eighteen (18) to thirty-five (35) who is physically fit for army life, and he should

join the department where his former experiences can help him, where he is more at home.

The man for the second is every man, woman, and child who can not be a wonderful business man, and who can do some work, in gardening, or in factory or in shipping, even tho physically they may not be O.K.

The man for the third is the businessman, and the rich man, whose money will help run the other two armies. Not one of these three armies can exist without the other, neither can this nation exist without them all, right now, and until God takes a hand.

Every home in the country will bear a share of the sorrows, but every true American will take his or her sorrow, as it comes, and not object forcibly no matter how hard it is and no matter how much it hurts, for the country's sake, their own sake, and for God's sake.

So believing all this, I joined the Marines two weeks ago, but have got transferred to the 1st Massachusetts Ambulance Corps, and will probably be called in about three or four weeks.

Hoping to see you all soon. Love to all, Clif.

Truly I did not know just what it was all about but certainly I was anxious to learn. Mother's eyes spoke volumes when I told her that I had enlisted, but she said nothing. My chief advisor, Professor Damon, objected to my enlisting so soon, but wished me a hearty "Good Luck". My English friend Gertrude, cheered aloud, as did "Dutch" Dodge, my nurse friend. In the meantime, all of the old debaters had enlisted in various units.

Our training began with squad and stretcher drill at the Armory on certain nights of the week. The rest of the week being spent in our own homes. In June we took up quarters in the Armory, and were subjected, as rookies, to some rough handling from the "old-timers", as training began in earnest. Our days were filled with lectures, drill, hikes, PT (physical training), and the ever-present "physical exams" and "papers to be filled out". We all took part in the big Red Cross parade of July 4th. Nights were filled with "good times in town", "quiet times at home", "old-timer capers", discussions, and hearty slumber. Spirits were high. A mighty army was in the making.

One day in July we packed our outfits onto trucks, and found toeholds wherever we could for ourselves, and moved out to Framingham under canvas. Camp discipline was new—and stiffer than we had anticipated—but we had to like it. Gradually we learned to awake, arise, fall-in, eat, drill, march, work, play, sleep, and

live, by bugle and by numbers. We soon knew better than to fill our stomachs with tonic while on a hard march under a hot sun. Rain-trenches we found, kept our tent floors dry in spite of heavy showers. It was all right to argue with buddies of our own rank, but to question the authority of the lowest "striper"—well, that was a different sort of story. Seasoned veterans worked with us and over us—reasoned, pleaded, demanded, cajoled, threatened, cursed, fought, and explained. Somehow we were improving—becoming more like soldiers. At any rate most of us were in better health than we had ever been before. There was plenty of time "off" and we made the most of it, learning the first rudiments of how to have a home in every town, receiving friends at camp, writing letters, reading, and in a thousand ways entertaining ourselves, often at the expense of someone else. The weather was good. Appetites were good. Grub was good. We were comfortable. The "newness" had not yet worn off. Soon we were saying, "This man's army isn't so bad after all—when do we go across?". Assigned to my tent were eight men—two from high school, one from college, a teacher from Amherst, a bookkeeper, two salesmen, and a shoemaker. All but one under thirty and two under twenty. Friendships were formed quickly, some of which will last as long as the lives of those who formed them. We were a happy, healthy lot, fast getting ready, and more than willing for the great adventure.

In August the Federal Army took charge of us. We had passed many tests, physical and otherwise, taken "jabs" against typhoid and sundry diseases after standing for hours in a broiling sun. "Bring on your Federal Medicos!" we shouted in all confidence. They came, grizzled and grouchy. The line formed. Inspection and examination began. But something was wrong. Man after man came out of the long tent with his confidence shaken. My turn came. I passed the body, eye, ear, throat, and teeth tests—breathed a sigh of relief and started out of the tent. An examining officer held me back, re-examined my teeth and said, "You sure had me guessing, but it is no use old man!" "*UNFIT!*" A terrible word then, as thousands can testify. My heart sank down to far below zero. All the tricks known to a fine and sympathetic Captain were tried, in vain, to "squeeze me by", and I had to face my comrades and tell them that I had failed. It WAS hell! On August 15th I left the unit to go to Belmont where my Mother lived. My discharge read, "by reason of physical disability—no teeth upper jaw—"! I doubt if there is anyone to whom I told the truth about my sudden leave from service.

August 17th I stood in the sun on the State House steps on Beacon Hill with two other "PDs" (Physical Disability). After some moments of silence I said, "Who's coming to Canada with me?" One "PD" answered, "I was good enough to go with the bunch to Mexico. Now they don't want me. Well—So long!" He walked away. The other boy came with me to the British Mission on Bromfield Street where we

told the "kilties" in charge that we wanted to join the Canadian Army. Were we Canadians? No! Then we would have to buy a ticket to some Canadian town. "That lets me out", said my mate, and so it did. I made further inquiries and then, hunting up a booking-office, bought a ticket to Frederickton, New Brunswick, via boat to St. John. I waited until after Mother's wedding on September 7th to "Dad" White before leaving, however, working in the meantime for the Adams Express Company in South Station. On the 8th I left for Canada. The Customs Officer gruffly asked why I was going to Canada. I told him to join the Canadian Army. After a moment of uncertainty, he gripped my hands in his and wished me a hearty "Good bye and good luck, my lad". My first "ocean" voyage terminated at St. John. While on the way the boat had stopped for a time at Eastport, Maine, where on reflecting that there was a feasibility of my not coming back from France, I went ashore for a possible last walk on American soil. During the ride from St. John to Frederickton I shared a seat with a wounded soldier fresh from hospital in "Blighty". From him I learned much that proved of value later on. That night I slept in the Windsor hotel—still a civilian, and an American citizen.

The Canadian Army—in Canada

Early on the morning of the 13th of September I applied at the Armory in Fredericton for admittance into the army. The OC (officer in charge) suggested the medical branch because of my training period with the ambulance unit at home. Examinations had been very simple, and the Canadians considered me in perfect condition. A sergeant in kilts told me that I was made for being an infantryman in a Scottish Battalion. As I considered the possibility a cool breeze blew in thru the window from off the St. John River, and I thought the sergeant's knees trembled, so I joined the Canadian Army Medical Corps with knees covered.

On the 17th of September I was transferred to the 8th Field Ambulance Corps at West St. John (Carleton). The barracks were on the docks, and housed the 62nd Infantry re-enforcement's, as well as the Ambulance and Hospital units. Here I swore allegiance to King George and the British Empire for the fifth time, was numbered 536636, ranked private, equipped, and put to serious training. Long route marches, stiff stretcher drill, lectures on first-aid, physical training, and regular guard duty about the wharf, made up my duties for several weeks. Sgt. Redfern, the first-aid instructor had been badly wounded and gassed in action across and proved an interesting as well as instructive non-com, who knew his work and had the needed patience to put his message across to us.

New friendships were formed and from the first I found the Canadians good fellows. Off duty we spent our time in much the same manner as I had in

Framingham. By the first of October I began to get restless. The duties grew tiresome. There was very little talk of "going across". Thus it was that I applied for a transfer to the artillery.

On my birthday I stood before Major Whetmore at the Martello Hotel Barracks of the 9th Siege Battery. "American, eh! Why didn't you join your own army?" "I did, Sir, but was discharged." I showed him my U.S.A. discharge. "Hell!" he exploded, "Do they think you're going over there to EAT the Germans? I guess that warrants your transfer." So my rank became that of Gunner. Life at the Martello was easy for a new man but we soon moved out to Partridge Island in the harbor where training was resumed. A gunner's training was harder, but there was much of interest, and talk of "going over soon" was common. On the island I received my first rifle drill, bayonet drill, and target practice. Gun drill was carried on until we showed possibilities, then we pounded away with 4.7s at targets on Red Head Point across the bay. A three-day-pass enabled me to spend Thanksgiving Day in Belmont with my family. Not long after returning to the battery a draft was drawn for overseas. My name was on the list. Those of us who were picked to go were a happy lot, the rest were truly downhearted.

In December we moved over to St. John on the mainland, taking up quarters in Horticultural Hall on the Exhibition Grounds. We were all ready to go across so had no further training in Canada. Our duties were to guard the docks, the powder house, the quarters, and such other sections as were likely to be the goal of spies. The winter of '17 was very severe and guard duty was a cold job. On the night of December 6 occurred the "Halifax Disaster", when the munitions ship "Mont Blanc" collided with the "Imo". The resulting explosions created havoc in the harbor and on shore. Fifteen hundred people lost their lives. St. John, with the rest of the country, felt the excitement. Guard was doubled and the feeling of responsibility trebled. On the 16th we boarded the Allen liner "Grampian", starting next morning for Halifax. After a night in Bedford Basin while the convoy formed, we steamed out onto the Atlantic. We were "going over" at last! It sure was a grand and glorious feeling.

For thirteen days on a rough December Atlantic the Grampian pitched, and tossed, and rolled, and struggled ahead, with every available inch of space packed with men, equipment, and supplies. Conditions below decks were terrible. Under decks were covered with filth in spite of the sailors' efforts to keep them shipshape. With most of the troops confined to their closely packed bunks, nearly everyone was sick. Those of us who remained well did so by spending as much time as was possible in the open, going below only to care for the luckless sufferers and to eat. Mess time was actually a time of mess. The rolling of the ship sent dishes and food in a scramble over the tables and decks. Tables collapsed under

the strain. Knives, forks, and spoons were dispensed with, for we found that the surest way to eat was to grasp firmly in our hands what food we desired, then convey it to our mouths in cannibalistic style. A very few of us were in such good health and spirits that we made many raids into the galley for delicacies meant for officers, who we knew were unable to eat. How much the Grampian was being thrown about we who were able to go on deck could realize by watching the Mesinabee, and other boats of the convoy. Waves of unbelievable size would swallow the forepart of the ships, until it looked as though they would founder, but somehow after a struggle they always pushed their bows back into sight.

Christmas night I spent on guard duty over the storerooms, and in being thrown between the scuppers and the storeroom walls. Rumors of submarines were common, more or less founded on fact, and strict watch was kept at all times. After dark there was not an open light to be seen in the whole convoy, except the occasional signal lights. One of the best remembered sights of the war, was the British destroyers coming out to meet us in the North Sea. The sleek gray speedsters swept around us cutting capers like so many lively puppies glad to welcome the master.

The morning of the 31st found me on deck waiting for the first glimpse of Liverpool. Very slowly the fog lifted. Gradually green hills and a little village of stone houses with red roofs came into sight. A double-decked tram crawled slowly along one street. Was this the great Liverpool? I hailed a passing dory, questioning the occupant, but it seems we did not speak the same language. Later as we made our way up the Clyde I learned that we had been anchored off Grennock in Scotland. Immediately rumor had it that our pilot boat had been sunk by torpedo, so we had put in there instead of Liverpool. From 10 A.M. until 5 P.M. the Grampian wallowed thru a muddy and narrow channel, arriving at last in Glasgow. All along the way we had seen ships in the making, and had been cheered by crowds who watched our progress. At Glasgow we were rushed aboard trains without ceremony. It was difficult under the circumstances to make the acquaintance of no more than a very few of the Scottish lassies who crowded around the cars. These cars were of the European compartment type and the first of that kind that I had ever seen. At first I was bewildered by so many doors, but in time I learned to like them, for they ride smoothly and permit acquaintances to be made quickly when necessary. As the bells rang in a new year we were riding thru Carlisle at a fast clip, trying to sleep in impossible positions. 1917 was gone. More nations had been added to those already at war. Unde Sam had been in the fighting line since October 21st when the First Division entered the Luneville Sector near Nancy. Were Cann, Dolan, Jackson, Black, and other mates of the 1st MAC (Massachusetts Ambulance Corps) there too? Peace overtures there had been aplenty but the

Brest-Litovsk treaty drawn up by the Germans after the collapse of Russia was reason enough that the war must go on. The Allies were gaining power, and yet the blackest days of early 1918 when Germany seemed to be crashing thru were many weeks away. As St. John's quota of reinforcements passed thru London we were all too tired to take notice of the great capitol.

The Canadian Army—in the British Isles, "Before" France

Long before daylight on the first day of the new 1918 several hundred very sleepy soldiers were being routed out of the train at Milford, Surrey. The outlook was none too pleasant. Just mud, and bushes, and trees dripping water. The uplook was no better. Just cold, drizzling rain. We "fell in", "right dressed", "counted off", "formed fours", and "by the right, marched" several miles thru mud to a city of wooden huts, set in, and surrounded by, more mud. Witley Camp! Here we were assigned to huts. "Five piece bunks" were issued, and those who knew how, or were ingenious enough to guess, put them together and rolled into their blankets to finish a sleep. Those who could not make the tricky little bunks work just rolled into their blankets on the floor and slept just as easily and soundly.

A few of us, up early next sun-up to explore our new home, were surprised to find our huts penned in by barbed wire and guarded by armed men. "What's the bright idea?" I asked one hard looking "Jock". "We've been cooped up for two weeks. How's chances of getting out and stretching our legs?" "Sure, go right ahead and stretch where you are. You're going to stay there for ten days!" So spoke my worthy guard. He was right, for ten days passed before quarantine was officially lifted, though after six days the guard grew lax and we learned that it was possible to bribe and otherwise gain freedom for a few hours. Quarantine had been necessary however to overcome disease originating on the crowded troopships. On the ninth day we were given an examination and those who passed learned that they were in for a six day leave of absence.

Among my mates in the new battery was Clarke, a schoolteacher from northwestern Canada, and Ferney from the east. Ferney's people lived in Edinburgh, the Princess city of Scotland. When our "leaves" came thru, the three of us chose Edinburgh as our destination. Late on the tenth we received our pay and left Witley. In London we separated after setting a time and place of meeting in Edinburgh for the thirteenth. London is a great town, and the fog, of which so much is said, does not interfere with the pleasures to be found there. My next forty-eight hours were busy ones, in fact, in all the many trips made later to London I do not remember one which was not packed to the utmost with "something doing". There is so much to be seen, so much to be done, so many friends to

make, that it seems almost a waste of time to sleep. The first show which I saw was "The Truth, and Nothing But The Truth" at the Savoy, after which came an excellent supper with a jolly crowd at an underground cafe on Fleet Street. My first night was spent at the American Eagle Hut where in the morning I had to steal an overcoat to replace my own stolen during the night.

At sundown London rapidly became the shrouded city. The mists were then more in evidence, and the city's only lights came from weak blue lamps at the "Tube" entrances. Even then the Zep's found London all too easily with their bombs. There are two ways, both interesting, of seeing part of the city. One is atop a bus and the other afoot. Of course the aviator has another way—but his way was not open to "buck gunners". The Victoria Embankment was a regular "happy hunting ground" at any time of day or night for the troops, sailors, and lonely lasses. During the evening of the twelfth, while walking thru Picadilly Circus with an Australian, we ran into a little riot between Colonials and Territorials. By the time the "bobbies" had arrived the riot had burned itself out and I was on board a train bound for Edinburgh. Once in a comfortable compartment I fell asleep and was not awakened until I was being tumbled out onto the platform in Edinburgh by a jolly trainman.

Clarke met me at the station and in a few moments we were being carried toward High Street by a jerky cable-tram. We arrived shortly at Robinson's Temperance Hotel, located within a few minutes walk of St. Giles Cathedral, John Knox's house, Edinburgh Castle, Holy Rood Palace, Princess Gardens, Sir Walter Scott's Monument, the National Galleries, and the point of interest of which some Scots are none too proud—King Arthur's Seat.

Friend Clarke had chosen our quarters with rare judgment. After a hearty breakfast we met Ferney and his people, and a steady round of pleasures commenced. In two days we saw much of the city's more interesting sights. We had shivered at the guide's gruesome tale of how this man had been horribly murdered on that spot. We had been frightened speechless for a few moments when the time gun at the castle had boomed out the "One O'Clock" with us standing beneath it, much to the wicked glee of the old-timer who had planned the affair, and we had made some acquaintances. On both nights we witnessed fair shows with fairer companions. A trip to Glasgow was made on the fifteenth. On the following day Clarke invited me to come with him to Broughty Ferry where we were the guests of the hospitable grandparents of some of my mate's pupils in Canada. In the afternoon the old grandfather drove us to a Dundee Hotel for a welcome dinner. It was not until the good old Scot told us "confidentially" that the hotel manager was a German, and possibly a spy, that Clarke and I realized what a rare lot of excellent Scottish hospitality we had been enjoying. This thrifty old Scot was a shrewd busi-

ness man. His comfortable home, a few moments ride in the bus from Broughty Ferry, was situated on his own land. His own sheep roamed his pasture lands, adding their wool to that brought in by neighbors to his mill. His decisions settled matters one way or the other in the economic and political questions that arose in the vicinity of his home. For nearly twenty years he had gone to Dundee at ten o'clock in the morning on the day of the week that my mate and I had chosen to call, to do the shopping for the coming week and to attend to certain business matters. Even the Great War had not interfered with this custom. When Clarke and I arrived he was just about to leave the house. There was no doubt but what two young soldiers could find plenty to do until he returned. He explained his leaving and offered apologies, but could not break a custom of so many years standing. Certainly not! Then his wife, who was ill and confined to her bed at the time, called to him from another room. There was a great tenderness in the Scot's voice as he answered, and a quality of gentleness seldom seen, in the manner in which he smoothed her pillow on going to the side of the bed. No word passed his wife's lips, but her eyes were talking. For several moments I watched the play of expressions on the two pleasant faces. Then he nodded in acquiescence. What a wealth of understanding existed between those two fine old lovers, for he did not go to town at ten o'clock, nor at eleven, or twelve, but waited until late afternoon when he went with Clarke and me to the hotel to dine. At just the right moment the old man ushered us out of the private dining room and led the way to his car. A few moments later my friend and I were aboard the Edinburgh train, having thanked our host for his many kindnesses and his invitation to come again. Clarke slumbered all the way back to the Princess City, while I discoursed at great length to all who cared to listen, on the merits of Scotsmen in general.

January 10th camp was broken and we were sorted according to fitness and placed with different units. A new six inch howitzer battery was being formed, into which went most of the old Partridge Island group, including myself. This battery was the Twelfth, and was to be my outfit from then on to the finish. No longer were we to be reinforcements without any special name or unit. We were the 12th Canadian Battery, with a definite purpose before us. With that realization came a great satisfaction. We were an "original" unit, and upon us fell the duty and honor of making its history. Our record though short, was clean. Our pride in our name, "12th Battery", was strong, and later when the old-timers dubbed us "Canada's last gift to the Empire" we liked the idea. When put to the test we proved a worthy gift—if I may be so bold as to express my honest opinion.

For a time the Twelfth remained at Witley, drilling hard all day, from five in the morning until five at night. Then we moved to South Minden Camp in Deepcut, Hampshire, not far from Aldershot, which has been a training ground for British

soldiers for many years. Here for some weeks we worked at preparing ourselves for battle. It was in Deepcut that we received our first night training. Day and night we maneuvered, with and without our howitzers. We learned to dig gun-positions, trenches and dugouts, and to understand orders given in rapid-fire manner, and what is more, we learned to execute orders.

At Deepcut we learned also, how to put on our gas-masks in three seconds, and many were the "supposedly" dead men after a "timed" trial. To teach us the difference between the gasses used in battle we were forced to walk in single file thru a hut, sealed except at entrance and exit, and charged with various of the temporarily dangerous gasses. In we went poorly concealing much nervousness. Out we came (some of us with help from attendants wearing masks, as we wore none), coughing, spitting, sweating, crying, laughing, or otherwise, according to each man's individuality. Brass buttons, watch cases, knives, coins, and any other metallic surfaces about our persons were turned black. Even gold crowns turned color in the mouths of the owners. The gas usually used for this trial was called "pineapple" or "tear" gas, and for a few moments a very small dose could render a man absolutely helpless, though its effect was not permanently harmful. The 12th Battery began to look like a fighting unit, with its days of training fast slipping by, and its "baptism of fire in action" not far off. The weather at Deepcut was a delightful change from that of Witley. Perfect days and nights, with just rain enough to temper them.

It was here at Deepcut that the "BIG 4" was formed when Cameron (Cam), Bosdet (Mex), Fisher (Dreamer), and Cate (Yank or Cankee), four members of the 12th battery joined hands and hearts in a group which soon became known as the "Big 4". It really wasn't so big, but as a combination for the welfare of the individuals of the group it was unbeatable. In training, on leave, in action, the Big 4 stuck together and many were its common joys and pains.

There was Charles Louis Bosdet, born of English parentage December 19, 1887 at Arichat, Nova Scotia. In 1911 he completed a special mine engineering course at Colby College in Maine, from which he found his way into Mexico where he followed the mining-industry until he heard the "call to arms" and traveled all the way to the "10th Battery" at Halifax, Nova Scotia to enlist as gunner with the regimental number 2100833. At Witley he transferred to the 12th where he found this Yankee. His service with the 12th came to an abrupt end in September (16th) 1918 when he "got a Blighty" in the form of a smashed knee. After a series of hospitals he rejoined the two remaining members of the "Big 4" at Rhyl and returned to Canada with them. Dubbed by some as "the smiling Mex" because of his rare good humor and naturally pleasing smile, he was a true friend, uncannily

lucky at games of chance, and is yet I presume, as of old, by far the wisest member of the "Big 4".

Alexander Nelson Cameron was also born in Nova Scotia, of Scottish-English parentage and he too enlisted in the 10th battery at Halifax in 1917. "Cam" was (still is, I hope) the most perfect specimen of healthy youth, physically, mentally, and morally, in the 12th, to which he was transferred at Witley Camp. He alone of the "Big 4" went thru it all without any visible scratch. In 1922 after graduating from a special course (won thru his efforts with a Canadian Insurance Company) at Carnegie Institute he visited with me for several wonderful days in Belmont.

Harry M. Fisher—a college professor—was another 10th battery man, transferring to the 12th at Witley where our old outfit was formed. His strength was in a well-developed brain, his weakness a Canadian sweetheart—and his nickname (if you will) "Dreamer". Until the Eswars episode which sent me out of the war for a short period he also served continuously with the 12th and the "Big 4", and because of that episode he too went out of the war for all time. I have never seen him since that night in a dry ditch on the outskirts of Eswars.

The spirit of the "Big 4" lives—its members are separated by thousands of miles, but someday we'll all get together again—to serve one another on and on thru eternity—with perhaps some younger editions of ourselves to help.

The last days at Deepcut were more than pleasant—but there WAS a war—and one night we moved out on short notice. At the end of Dunge Ness Point in Kent, is Lydd, and just across the Strait of Dover is Boulogne in France. It was to the camp at Lydd that we moved from Deepcut. Here the huts were of metal, and it was well that they were, for at Lydd the gunners got their first actual target practice with the shiny new six inch howitzers. The rivalry between gun crews, the jarring of the guns as they blasted away at fixed or moving targets, the nearness of France,

and a none too jolly relationship between ourselves and several English Territorial units in the camp, sobered the 12th. The business at hand became the chief interest, and in spite of many trips out of town on foot or by cycle, faces wore a more serious aspect. Hastings, Eastbourne, Foldstone, Dover, Ashford, and the flying school at New Romney, were the more frequently visited places. At the latter many of us took our first ride in a balloon or aeroplane. This "air-school" was American, and their baseball team provided worthy competition for our own, which came very near being the best in the vicinity.

Out on the range, one day, a thousand men were picking up brass and copper scraps left by the exploded shells. These scraps were piled near the narrow-gauge railroad that lay across the range, sometimes in a straight line, though often thrown criss-cross by shellfire. Later this valuable metal would find its way back into the munitions plants to be used over again in fuses and bands. Many unexploded shells, or "duds", lay about, and when found were left unmolested. Their location was marked by placing sticks upright in the shale nearby with a rag tied to the upper end to attract the attention of the Royal Engineers, whose duty it was to care for these dangerous explosives. Over our heads the blue sky was dotted here and there with fleecy white clouds. The sun sent its warmth into our hearts and the beauty of the day was manifested by much song and fooling. For several miles about us the earth was covered with loose pebbles or shale. In the direction of camp there were patches of coarse grass, and beyond them, sand and more grass. Not far away was the sea—restless and mysterious as ever—cloaked in all the splendor of a perfect day. To our right stood a small stone building enclosing the laboratory in which many secret experiments were carried on with highly explosive materials. Here Lyddite had been developed. Suddenly—a roar! Many

of us were knocked to the shale. When we were all again on our feet, one British Marine lay still. Someone had "fooled" with a "dud". This was the first of the many deaths to shell burst that we were to see. The work went on—but many pairs of eyes watched the little flatcar as it rolled slowly back to camp with "somebody's boy".

One morning on "parade" we received a lecture from Major Robinson, a seasoned old veteran who had already lost an eye in France while an Infantry officer. The substance of what he said was that—our period of training was over—our instructors had done their best to prepare us for the test which was soon too come—we had "almost" developed into soldiers—we had all the appearances of a fighting unit—we would conduct ourselves accordingly—meanwhile we were to be granted an eight day leave—we were entitled to a good time but must remember that we were Canadians—on expiration of our leave we would meet at Codford in Wiltshire—that was all. During his talk I thought of Lieutenant Inches, one of our officers on Partridge Island who had said much the same thing several months before, and who, when the time came for us to leave Canada was held behind as an instructor. I thought how much it would have meant to him to have been with us, for when the order for him to stay behind was read, his disappointment had been tremendous.

[Note: This passage is particularly poignant as much later, during the Second World War, Lt. Col. Clifton J Cate, Commanding Officer of one of the last all-Black Regiments to train as a unit, at Camp Rucker, Alabama, was deemed too valuable as an Infantry Replacement Training Officer, to be assigned to accompany "his troops" into combat in the African and European theaters. Even though the Regiment was disbanded shortly after completing its training (before ever being battle tested), and its members "absorbed" into other commands as part of the military's desegregation efforts, being left behind was a bitter disappointment and certainly contributed to that officer's resigning his commission and leaving active service when the opportunity presented itself. CCC]

Spring had come while we were in training in England, and nature had already come to life. For the last leave "before France" Bosdet and I joined lots, and shutting our eyes placed a finger apiece on a large map in the battery office. Half way between where our finger tips touched the map was Preston in Lancashire. Thus Preston became our "official" destination. Unofficially it was our intention to go where our fancy suggested. Much depended on the girls, and "old-timers" looked quizzically at a leave marked "Preston" as they passed us to a train going elsewhere. Canterbury, where Bosdet's uncle, Charles Fixot, managed a hut of the Church Army, became our first stop. A rare fellow was that uncle, and a most

excellent judge of good steaks and wine. A rare old town that Canterbury, with its grim old walls and gates, and beautiful historic Cathedral, and the Cathedral cloisters and Bell Harry Tower, and that "old-time-first" steam locomotive resting proudly on its stand near the locomotive factory. After Canterbury came London, then Birmingham, then Manchester the great mill city, followed by Stockport where we saw how airplanes were made, and then—Preston. As Bosdet and I stepped from our compartment, two girls stepped in. Instantly we decided NOT to stop over in Preston.

Just as the train started I assisted a lady with a dog and a heavy bag into our compartment. The fates were kind that day, for that lady was Mrs. Fannie Thompson of Number 11 Baker Street, Burnley, in whom I found a good friend. It is to her that I owe my thanks for what few notes, snapshots, postcards and souvenirs, survived the war to remain in my possession. When possible I sent to her what few things I wanted preserved—she did her part well. At Blackpool we left the train, and while Bosdet escorted the girls to their home I carried Mrs. Thompson's bag to the home of her mother. It was just such homes as this that made my stay in the British Isles one long series of pleasant memories. There were many pleasant hikes about the famous seashore town of Blackpool. Time went fast and our leave was all too short, so we left Blackpool to go to Liverpool, thence to Birkenhead by ferry. Finally we arrived in the city of Chester—one that I can never forget. In this old town that was begun in the year 48, we roamed about for many hours. Here we forgot the war, the Mersey, et. al., as we walked along the old walls, climbed into the Water Tower and King Charles Tower, visited God's Providence House, Hawarden Castle, the Cathedral, and Eaton Hall, marveled at "The Row" on Watergate Street and its quaint old buildings, climbed over the ruins of St. John's Church, Museum Tower, and the Roman Bath. We wound up our visit with a long walk around the city, which ended on Dee Bridge over the River Dee.

Chester was only the beginning of a period of "enchantment". At the station we had boarded a train bound for Holyhead, and as it rolled smoothly along the coast of northern Wales we found ourselves in a country so beautiful that I find myself at a loss for adjectives suitable for properly describing it. At Conway, no longer able to sit still, we left the train. This charming old castle town became our headquarters, with a place to eat and sleep, when we grudgingly took the time, at the home of Mrs. Johnson (Number 3 Newbury Terrace) snug up against the castle wall. Many hours were spent in exploring the castle, "built in 1284 for Edward I, by Henry of Eaton, designer of Carnarvon Castle, famous during the Civil War, finally granted to the Earl of Conway by Charles II", so our fourteen year old guide told us in an almost unintelligible English. From a tower above Queen Eleanor's Chapel, I picked a primrose, a beautiful yellow flower, which I sent that

night to my Mother in Belmont. Clinging to the ancient town wall, facing the Conway River, is the smallest house in Great Britain. In its two tiny rooms, one over the other, lived an old couple who contrived to get a living out of visitors. Bicycles again came into use and many wonderful trips resulted. Deganwy, Llandudno (pronounced Klandidnoo) with its cable-tram to the summit of Great Ormes Head and its Happy Valley, its Marine Drive, wonderful beach and bay, Llandrilloyn, Rhos, Colwyn Bay, Dwggyfylchi, Penmaenmawr, Llanfairfechan, Aber, Bangor, Penryhn Castle, Bethesda, Carnarvon and the castle, Llanbiris, Snowdon, which is Britain's highest peak (3560 feet above sea level), Capel-Curig, Llanwrst, and Bettws-y-coed, where Bosdet and I met two other Welsh girls who seemed pleased to guide us to Swallow and Machno Falls, after which hike we were served a fine lunch at the Oakfield.... (New England nearly lost one of her most loyal sons among those enchanted hills of northern Wales.)

Over in France the Hun was advancing all along the line. His guns were playing havoc particularly with the British near Cambrai. Lives were being sacrificed on all sides to hold the line until reinforcements could arrive. It dawned upon Bosdet and me one evening as we witnessed a wonderful sunset from a hill back of the castle with Gladys and her chum, that our leaves must be up. We checked up on the dates, and the next train carried us away from Wales and into Crewe. Here two Red Cross girls serving buns and coffee held our attention just long enough for us to miss one train. At Birmingham we met two old friends and went out of our way a little to visit Bristol with them. Then on to Bath, and Salisbury. We arrived late in the evening, proceeding at once to get into trouble with two "MPs" (Military Police). Strong arms, and later strong legs, saved us from arrest. At the "New Crown Inn" we found food and shelter for the night. Early next morning—out in Salisbury Plain, the gathering place for British and other soldiers for years—and by ten o'clock we were in Codford, several days "AWOL" (absent without leave).

Of course we went on the inevitable "carpet" before Colonel Beeman of the Third Brigade, to which the Twelfth was attached. With the Colonel was our own Major Robinson and our Captain, Colin McKay. The charge read "...and conduct unbecoming a good soldier... and absent without leave...", among other things. The "Mex" had an idea, and said, "If we tell them the truth, they won't believe us, but if we tell 'em a 'good one' he (the Colonel) may 'let us down light'". I agreed with Bosdet. Then he said, "We'll both tell the same yarn—and STICK to it". Before we could rehearse our parts the Sergeant-Major called Bosdet into the "presence". As he came out a few moments later he winked. I went in. As I passed thru the doorway my hat was snatched from my head. (A soldier without his hat is "undressed") As I stood at attention, facing the three officers, the "charge" was read. Thru my mind ran a host of thoughts, chiefly concerned with what Bosdet

had told them. I thought of a dozen possible explanations, any one of which might have formed the nucleus for my mate's story. Which should I pick to tell? How soon after I commenced would I be able to read upon those stern faces what Bosdet had said? Then the Colonel said, "Gunner Cate, what have you to say in answer to these charges?" I answered at once, "I was with Bosdet, Sir." The Colonel grunted, stroked his chin with his hand, pressed his lips firmly together, and looked at me, and thru me, from under his wrinkled brow. Then he said, after several moments, "Do you think it adds anything to the color of the cloth to go off and get drunk and come back days after your leave has expired?" So that had been Bosdet's idea. The "old man" looked angry. For some moments his gaze, directed directly into my eyes, called forth all of my nerve to keep from looking away out of the line of fire. I could not suppress a smile as I said, "No, Sir." Then the old man's eyes were turned to look at my Major and Captain. Robinson was grim, but McKay's lips twisted into a smile, which was followed by a chorus of smiles from all three officers. "Thirty days R.W." (Royal Warrant, or stoppage of pay*), snapped the Colonel. That was all. Outside, Bosdet was waiting, and as I walked up to him he smiled and said, "A few days Royal Warrant! Was it worth it?" I answered, "Yes, old 'wise one'."

(Note: This pay was given to us at time of discharge. CJC*)*

[Although related somewhat lightly, that this episode concerned Gnr. Cate, however, is evidenced in a little confession expressed later in one of many letters to his grandmother: CCC]

#536636 C.G.A.
#12 Canadian S. Bty.
B.E.F, France
22nd May, 1918

My darling Grandmother:

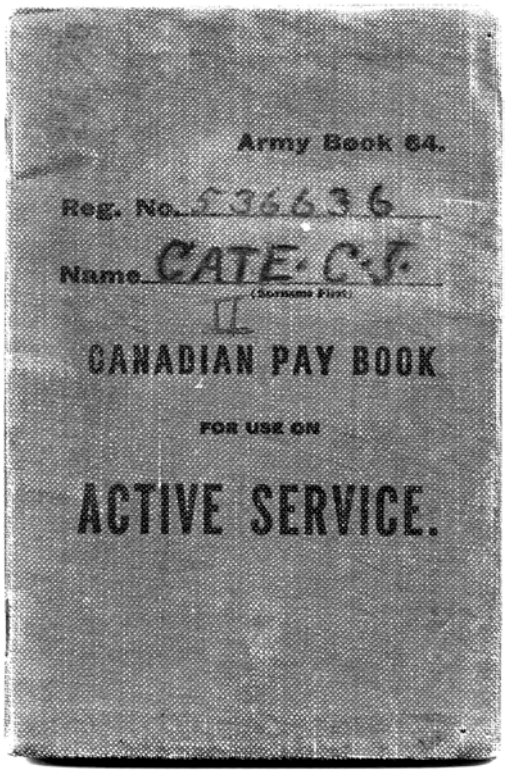
For once I have four full hours when I am sure of being undisturbed—just the chance for a word with you—eh?

In my letter to Mildred not long ago I told her of my fine rest leave in Northern Wales and a few English places. She has no doubt told you all about it so I won't repeat it.

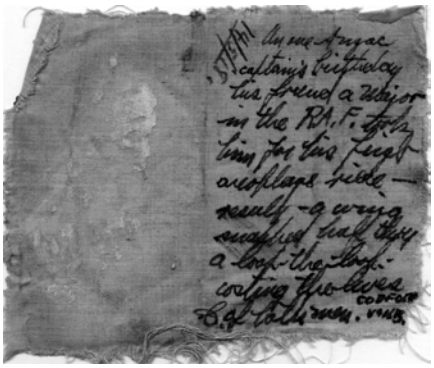
Whether I told her about getting "admonished and two days' pay stopped" or not I do not remember—this the colonel gave me as a punishment for staying away two days overtime—it was well worth the trouble to me for one can not see

Wales in a day. However since I know how anxious you are to have me keep a clean crime-sheet I will say for the benefit of us both that that little extra vacation is not considered bad enough to dirty my sheet—which so far has never been touched. Further to give you an idea of my physical condition, may as well add that my name has never appeared on the hospital or sick list. Never was better—the worst thing I have had being a cold which I lost way back on Partridge Island in Canada....

Codford in Wiltshire, one of the small villages on Salisbury Plain, consisted mostly of plaster or clapboard homes with straw thatched roofs. There were one or two fair estates, boasting of stone houses, and a very few brick buildings, with tile roofing. Most of the shops were cheap affairs, as were common in all troop-infested towns. The several churches monopolized the structural beauty of the town. Here the Australians had a large camp and hospital. Several big hills shut the village in on one side. The rest of the place looked out over the plain. Though the River Avon was not far off, the only stream here was the Ford, which ambled lazily thru the town. To this place, which without the excess of troops, would have been serene indeed, came the 3rd Brigade for a short rest before going to France.



Our camp was comfortable, food was good, duties were very light, the weather was perfect, and our time was spent for the most parts in sports. Long hikes over the hills rewarded the hikers with sound sleep when they turned in for the night. One bright day I watched a plane come sailing, apparently, out of the sun. It circled over the camp and headed off over the big hill. All at once a wing flashed in the sunlight and collapsed against the body of the craft. The plane came tumbling to earth like a giant wounded bird. As it crashed, rebounded from the gentle slope of



the hill, and settled back a complete wreck amid the shower of turf and dirt, the hillside swarmed with men running from every direction. When I reached the spot, its two occupants were being removed from the fuselage. In a few hours they had gone on the long flight. The story was that the pilot, a major of the "RAF" (Royal Air Force), was giving a New Zealand Infantry Captain his first (and last) air ride, as part of the latter's birthday celebration.

At Codford our equipment was inspected and put in completeness for service at the front. Though life was easy there, we all knew that the orders for our move to a channel port were in the brigade office. On one fine morning we paraded in marching order, and preceded by the "Aussie" band, marched to the railroad where we were assigned to first class compartments for a ride thru malt and hop fields to Southampton. In short order we were aboard a transport, steaming out by the Isle of Wight into the English Channel. Ahead of us: France, the line, and the Hun.

The Canadian Army—in France

With Britain and "playdays" behind us, and France and "workdays" (and nights!) ahead of us, the channel transport was not long in covering the hundred and twenty-five miles from Southampton to Le Harve, at the mouth of the Seine. As we trotted over the gangplank onto French soil, a few dockworkers, soldiers and sailors gave us a welcome. Deep within our secret thoughts was the realization that our coming was tardy, so the little welcome cheer helped to put our consciences at ease. Thru dingy streets leading away from the gaunt old warehouses, we marched to Rest Camp Number One, carrying all our personal equipment. Assigned to tents, we began looking around the camp, finding that it was but slightly different from the camps across the channel.

AS THE SUN GOES DOWN, THE TROOPS MOVE UP-LINE

Our next move was into the little boxcars, the markings of which, "40 Hommes ou 8 Chevaux" (forty men or eight horses), have found their way into practically

every story of the war. Then a long, tedious and bumpy ride into Rouen and the interior. The boxcars on French railroads were toy affairs, and forty men per car meant that most of them stood on their feet (or some other fellow's feet) for the duration of the ride. Usually, in cool weather, in the center of the car, burned a brazier, which so filled the atmosphere with soot, smoke, and gas, that breathing was all but impossible. On many of the cars, at one end, was a small ell or tower, the top of which extended anywhere from one to three feet above the top of the car proper. To get away from the uncomfortable atmosphere inside the car, many of us rode in these towers or on the car roofs. This practice was all right in fair weather or when our route did not lie thru some of the many low tunnels. Often the clearance of the latter was less than six inches on all sides, so that casualties were common occurrences.

St. Pol followed Rouen. Here the guns were unloaded from the flatcars which had brought them from Le Havre, and fastened to "FWDons" (Four-wheel-drive-trucks). Supplies and ammunition were also transferred to lorries. Then we found room wherever we could and the caravan started for "up the line". Every kilometer covered brought further evidence of the struggle that had been going on for over three years: razed homes, blasted trees and posts, fields turned topsy-turvy, and then we came to an area of absolute ruin. Just before dark we reached a small group of corrugated metal huts, covered with sandbags and "elephant tin" (curved sections of corrugated metal) where we found shelter [?] for the night.

ELEPHANT TIN HUT VILLAGES.

Bunks on the "hen wire springs" were quickly prepared, and we soon fell asleep. Our awakening came not naturally, nor with the morning, but at about midnight, to find our scalps strangely bristling, our spines all aquiver, and in our mouths a strange "stingy" taste. The night was crowded with awe-inspiring sounds: whines, whirs, growls, crashes, shrieks, and just plain "bangs"; the whole exhibition accentuated by many weird flashes of light. *This* was Jerry's "Welcome-in" party. We

were getting our "baptism". A few of us just stared—wondering, while others ran about bewildered, and some "just naturally" disappeared, to be rounded up later covered with mud and dirt. On leaving my bunk I had run out to a little mound apart from the huts. There I stood, and watched, and listened, too fascinated to run or duck. My emotions during that first few minutes (if I registered any) are not on record. There were no casualties. As a matter of fact, as the "old-timers" explained, those shells were on their way to Mt. St. Eloi and vicinity, and none was likely to land nearer than a thousand yards. Then the "OTs" ordered us back into our bunks. All of us obeyed—some of us slept.

CANADIAN ARTILLERY MEMORIAL, VIMY, FRANCE.

Thru a section of France already made famous by Canadians—Vimy Ridge, Thelus Wood, Plank Road, Suicide Corner, and other names full of meaning—the 12th moved, and at Nine Elms went into position.

NINE ELMS, FRANCE, EARLY 1918—AN UNCANNY SPOT

Our first firing was done under ideal conditions, with fair weather, and no answering fire from enemy batteries. Except that we were firing from a "pit", we might have been back in Lydd, firing at a hidden target; so unexciting it all seemed. With our brains busy interpreting orders, and our hands at work executing them, we grew accustomed to conditions quickly. Firing hundred-pound shells at German troops, gun positions, trenches, machine gun nests, posts of observation, and all manner of targets, became "all in the day's work"—just as we soon learned to take the noise of our own guns, the sudden "opening up" of a nearby battery, the whining and exploding of

Hun shells, gas, the sight of wounded and dead men and animals, filth, cooties, and air raids as routine in the line—along with all the rest that goes with the ghastly senselessness of "civilized" warfare.

HEN WIRE, BURLAP, POSTS, TIN, HOLE: "A DUGOUT"

Gun crews were "on duty" twenty-four hours, and "off" the same length of time before going back. During the "off" period, they kept busy "while resting", by digging dugouts, "humping" shells and ammunition, and doing all the other work that could be found by sharp-eyed officers. For a while Bosdet and I spent much of our "off" time in prospecting the vicinity for souvenirs and sights, finding a lot of both. Out alone one morning, I had roamed some distance from the position when an "inquisitive" shell buried me alive in an old trench. This spoiled my taste for exploring, so Bosdet and I went to work on a two-man dugout that was to be a work of art. The dugout WAS a work of art, but the effort was wasted, for on the day following its completion the battery moved away from that vicinity.

Leaving Nine Elms, the Battery went into Arras. In this town the positions were changed from time to time. Sometimes a position would be subjected to shells from Heinie's guns continuously, while at others we enjoyed days without receiving a shell in our direction. The Dainville "orchard" position ("A" gun) was such a position for almost a week. From this position we were firing mostly gas, and at night the gunners were often forced to don masks to protect themselves against "leaky" shells. Almost every time we fired during the first night, we were showered with apple blossoms and little apples from the trees overhead.

RUINS IN LA GRANDE PLACE, ARRAS, FRANCE—1918.

For the trooper who cared little for sleep, or who could not be worried by "harassing fire", machine guns or long range snipers, there was much to be seen about Arras. The ruined convent buildings, shattered and scattered homes, desolate parks, deserted squares,—all were duly "inspected", sometimes nearly at the cost of our lives when an unexpected high-explosive shell found a place to bury its nose near us, sending showers of debris over and around us. The two sights that never failed to bring forth harsh remarks about Fritz were the wrecked dwellings, and the Arras Cathedral. The latter was but an irregular mound of gray dust, with

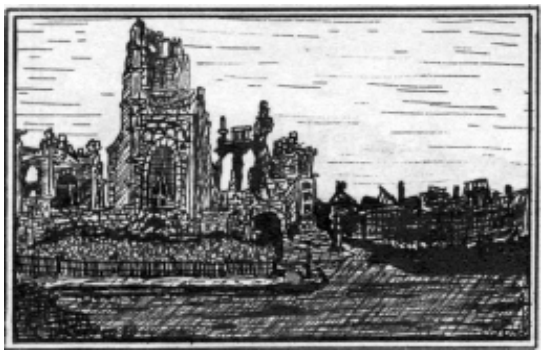
here and there a section of a wall poking its few remaining feet of raggedness up above the rest. A few statues there were, still standing upright, but pitted and cracked by the shell splinters. Beneath the surface were many subterranean corridors and chambers. In several of these were great piles of irregular gray blocks, and on most of the blocks were written the names and addresses of soldiers—many thousands of them in all.

ARRAS CATHEDRAL—RUINS OF THE TOWER CORNER.

The vicinity of Blavincourt was quiet, boasting of fair-sized groves, fruit orchards, vegetable gardens, fields crisscrossed by hedges and dotted with farms and villages of no particular note. Our camp of wooden huts and bell tents was situated on the edge of a little forest near Blavincourt. On the other edge of the forest was Beaufort and beyond Beaufort was Avant-le-Comte, Tinques (where the Canadians celebrated Dominion Day), and Harbarque. Here our only danger lay in air raids which occurred at rare intervals, and in disease, which was more common. Pneumonia took our first life. Influenza followed, reducing the active force of the battery by about one-third, as evidenced on one dull morning during a "GOC"'s (General Officer Commanding) inspection. As far as I know there were no fatalities. Segregation followed by prompt medical treatment saved the day. The fact that we were out of the line and able to rest properly helped also.

A second trip into the line near Arras was not like the first. "A" gun was somewhere in the vicinity of the famous Daisy O-Pip (Daisy Observation Post), where the earth had been soaking up the blood of thousands of Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, English, French,

and German youths at intervals for nearly four years. A desolate region indeed. A hill, sparsely covered with withered tree stumps and tangled barbed wire, a section of filthy trench, a cemetery where even the dead had been torn from their slumbers to peel in the sun and bleach in the rain; a veritable "no-man's-land"—and another storm was brewing. It was while on a trip with a ration detail from this position that I first saw the "White City", a level waste of grayish-white color, where once a prosperous village had stood. The army existed in this section, under cover, because it had to, but aside from the rats and vermin there was no other life. From one position to another we moved, with conditions steadily growing worse, the German shellfire more deadly, with the 12th sending its contributions with the rest, to the dressing stations—"walking cases" when they had the strength, ambulance cases otherwise. And at the dressing stations an endless line of mutilated humanity, painfully moving "down the line" to Base Hospitals and "Blighty". Hun bombing planes too were getting more reckless, making life on earth hell, and life "in the earth" almost as bad.



One night, as I lay in a hole in the wall of a trench, I heard the faint crying of a cat, and so I investigated. There, on the parapet was a kitten. How she got there I do not know, unless some of the fresh troops had just brought her in. Until the gas killed her a few days later, I found much pleasure in her company. *[Mention of this incident appears in the following letter: CCC]*

Dearest Grandma:

...While I was out on my rest the last time, I sat in this same little cozy hole in the wall of the trench and wrote home—while writing a kitten walking across the wire jumped into the trench and we two speedily became acquainted. I was just thinking of her and where she went when I had to go back up the line—and behold—ye kitten's mind must have been thinking of me for here she is—returned to my hole now that I am back—guess she is hungry and my stomach says time for lunch too—so good-bye & love to you both. Clifton

Roaming was, of course, impossible. The instant my relief reached my gun I was ready to rest, and thus spent most of my "off duty" time "under ground". "This business of War is getting worse all the time," suggested one of the gunners one night. Nobody laughed at this. Even the old-timers held their customary "wise-cracks", saying only that the worst was yet to come. And, so it was, as planning for the '18 Somme Drive was already underway

On July 19th, we were in Blavincourt for a short rest. A few days later we were back in the line sandwiched in between Flanders and Picardy pounding away with everything our guns could fire. Vague rumors were in the air. Things were happening all along the line. "They say"—that Heinie has just failed to make good a great drive on the Marne—that the "Frogs" and the "Yanks" are pushing him back all along the line—that thousands of prisoners have been taken—and a hundred other things. In the Artois Region (our own sector) we knew that things WERE happening. Our guns were seldom, if ever, cool. Positions were moved forward often, firing elevations were getting higher, the "wounded" lines grew heavier, prisoners aplenty were in our hands, and Jerry's artillery was becoming uncanny in the way it found our positions....

Then came a sudden move away from Arras, a fast night ride, a day in Reubaumpre [?], another night ride, bouncing over rough roads at top speed: Amiens, the Somme, and into position in a valley near Villers-Brettoneux. (The valley has been called "Bloody Valley", "Dead Man's Valley", as well as several other names. Just what its proper name is I do not know.) The 12th was not alone. Apparently endless columns of Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, Tank Corps, Red Cross Sections, ammunitions and stores, and all manner of battle array were pouring into that sector with us, under cover of a heavy mist and camouflaged highways. Soon after daybreak on that memorable August eighth, the 12th moved forward thru Villers-Bretonneux, where we realized for the first time something of the telling effect of our shells of the night before. As far as eye could see... complete devastation. Not a thing left upright. Homes, trees, poles, wires, railways, wagons, trucks, guns of every description, ammunition, and... men, scrambled together into one immense "dump". The bodies of men and horses were strewn all about, mangled in every possible manner. How many men were buried in that "mess" no one will ever know. Many khaki and blue covered forms were being put beneath the ground as quickly and carefully as possible.

As the sun went down, displaying a wonderful galaxy of colors, a column of cavalry advanced by our camp. When the moon had advanced high into the heavens, the end of that column had not yet come into sight. The "plop, plop, plopping" of the horses' hooves, the rattle of bits and chains, the clanking of sabers against the creaking saddles, the silence of the riders in that seemingly endless

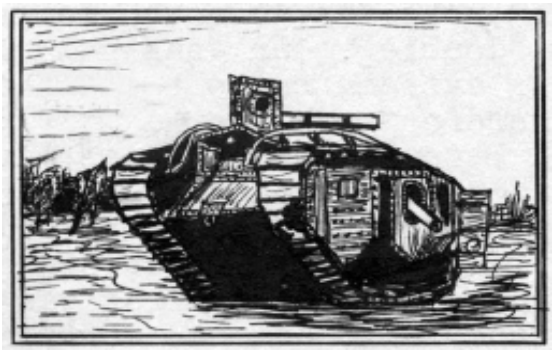
column, made one of the most impressive experiences of my period of service. That night the battery enjoyed a much needed sleep. But not the battery as it had been a few days earlier, for more than a few of the boys had been left behind.

The next day we moved forward at the "double". Our guns had fired at their extreme range the night before, therefore much ground had to be covered before we were again within easy range. The scenes of the previous days were renewed with somewhat of an increase in our own dead and wounded. The Hun's back was against the wall, and his gunfire was more deadly. Disabled tanks and lorries of our own were common. At a captured narrow gauge railhead we found thousands of rounds of German ammunition, guns, wagons, and several engines with their cars on the narrow gauge rails.

DESTROYED BRITISH TANK AT ADVANCE POSITION, VRELEY, FRANCE.

Here firing was resumed by the alternate crew of "A-sub", thus giving me the opportunity to roam around a little. My first balloon ascension in France was made not far from this position, and was thoroughly enjoyed until the mobile winch had hauled in the cable, and I found that both the observer and I were in for trouble. I was not "supposed" to do such things, and he was not "supposed" to permit me to do them. Air fighting was on the increase, with both sides making good their right to the name of "Hero". As I roamed I used my camera, and some of the "shots" made that day are with me now. Several of us, who had roamed, were left behind when the battery moved forward again. We became separated after night had fallen, so I rolled into a shell hole to sleep until daybreak. On awaking, my nostrils were besieged with a terrible odor. On moving my head I discovered the cause in the body of a German officer, dead for at least forty-eight hours. Such is not a pleasant bedfellow! By nine o'clock I had located my battery which soon pulled into Vrely. With the advancing of two guns into a hidden position between Rosierres and Meharicourt under cover of darkness the 12th reached the limit of its advance on this drive.

At Vrely there were many periods of very stiff action, with enemy fire heavy and deadly. While the ground forces blasted away at one another, the air forces did their part to make life on earth and in the air more than miserable. "Dog fights" between numbers of our own and enemy planes occurred daily, always with losses to both sides, but with the better average steadily growing for our own fliers. Enemy armored planes carrying their photographers, often flew so low and so slowly over our positions that on several occasions we were able to hit them with stones thrown from the ground. At such times our antiaircraft guns could not,



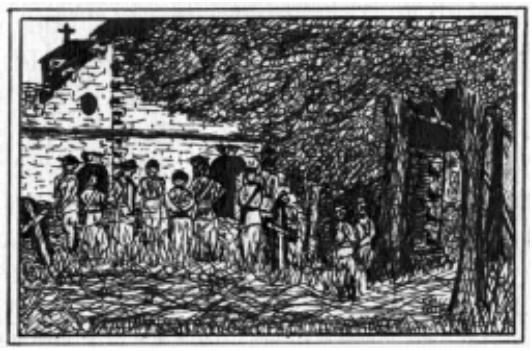
with safety to our own men in the vicinity, fire at these planes, though the machine guns sent steady streams of lead and "chaser" bullets against their sides and bottom while many of us lay on our backs with captured German rifles trying to catch the pilot with his own lead. Either we were poor riflemen or he was too well protected to worry, for always he took his time, made his pictures of our positions, and escaped back to his own lines before one of our planes could catch him. For variety he would sometimes answer our fire, which on several occasions left him the winner of the engagement. Gun positions in the village were shifted from time to time as Jerry's artillery found us, thanks to the good efforts of his photographers.

Sometime in the latter half of September the French came in to relieve us, filling Vrely Square after dark with a host of men, horses, and battle paraphernalia. Someone was careless enough to display a tiny light which was seen by German observers in their bombing planes so high above us that we had not heard their motors. Immediately there came the unique whistling sound of falling bombs, followed by the dread C-R-U-M-P! C-R-U-M-P!, as they detonated in the square and vicinity. Some thirty men were lost, including several of our own. Our good Major lost a leg, and Captain Colin McKay, a rare chap, became our chief officer. The events of that night were sickening—too much so for me to attempt a description here—and out of them came a Medal Militaire for Bombardier Brown, a medical orderly of the 12th. On the following morning, Canadian and French joined in funeral services, punctuated by frequent shell bursts, in the little churchyard.

IN THE CHURCHYARD AT VRELY—SEPTEMBER, 1918.

The following story I will not vouch for as true, though it is quite likely that some such thing did occur. The French detail sent to the churchyard to prepare the graves for their dead, found most of the space there occupied by German graves. Rankling under the unhappy loss of the night before, they tore open many of the graves, and throwing the dead Boche into an old dry well nearby, applied

petrol and then a torch to the lot. (You have the story as it was told to me. Such things seem far more horrible in times of peace to those who have never been drawn into the real active fighting area of war, but to those who "know", far worse things have often happened.)



THE CANADIAN "Y" AND LINEUP AT VRELY

With us at Vrely, as everywhere else, was the Canadian "YMCA". To its personnel, all honor is due. Most were wounded men from the front unable to stand more active service (however, as "Y" secretary in any advanced position, their plight was no less dangerous than any other).

One afternoon while on duty at the "forward" position I found to my horror, that there was not a cigarette, a "chew", nor tobacco of any kind among the two crews. Such a sad condition was a most serious one with us, as "fags" were as necessary as "ammo". At the time a man could be spared to find a "Y" and replenish the supply, so I volunteered for the honor and started for the rear. Finding my path blocked by heavy enemy fire I retraced my steps and headed for Meharicourt, where I had heard that the infantry had established a "Y". Two kilometers over shell pitted ground spread with tangled barbed wire were covered after much ducking of shell splinters and machine gun fire. In the town an infantryman directed me to the dugout where I purchased a good supply of "fags", plug tobacco, and sweet chocolate at a reasonable price. (cigarettes were 1 franc, plugs—2 for 1, and chocolate was 2 bars for 1 franc.) On the return I skirted the area where Hun machine guns had so nearly

found me a target not long before, and in so doing had to climb over a mound of debris. At the top of the mound was one straggling rosebush bearing a single rose in full bloom. Less than a foot away was the outstretched arm and hand of an all but buried German private. Seemingly his last thought had been to pluck the rose, though of course, such had not been the case. At first sight however, the view held an uncanny appearance. I still have that rose of Meharicourt (which is in Picardy), as a treasured souvenir. As a result of the thoughts that were set going in my mind on that occasion, I "waxed poetic", as the boys called it, and for a long time after that day, a certain old song kept running thru my mind. It was "Roses of Picardy", a story of roses, and longing, and love:

She is watching by the poplars,
Colinette with the sea blue eyes,
She is watching and longing and waiting
Where the long white roadway lies.
And a song stirs in the silence,
As the winds in the boughs above.
She listens and starts and trembles,
'Tis the first little song of love:—
"Roses are shining in Picardy,
In the hush of the silver dew,
Roses are flow'ring in Picardy,
But there's never a rose like you!
And the roses will die with the summer time,
And our roads may be far apart!
But there's one rose that dies not in Picardy!
'Tis the rose that I keep in my heart!"
[Lyrics: Fred E. Weatherly, Music: Haydn Wood—1916]

Taking my cue from that song, I composed my own tragic and comic versions of what took place that day in homage to the Rose of Picardy.

A Rose of Picardy

There's a song that fills the heart with warmth,
The mind with reverie,
'Tis a song of love and lovers,
And of roses grown in Picardy.

There's another song less known perhaps
And of somewhat dissimilar theme
That also speaks of a rose that grew

Nearby a Picardian stream.

Here's a petal from that latter rose
Found where romance, ageless, thrived,
In a land where Cupid with arrows and bows
Many terrible wars survived.

'Tis part of a rose that I found one day
In Meharicourt in early September,
'Neath a smiling sun in a clear blue sky.
How well, indeed, I remember.

The Great War surrounded me
Disgorging its hell and its sorrow,
Its whine of bullets, and roaring of shells.
Warm life today — cold death tomorrow.

Alas! Poor war-torn Meharicourt !
Smoking mounds of twisted debris,
Trenches, dug-outs — now a Canadian fort,
Protected by our Infantry.

At the top of one heap that once was a home,
In full bloom grew a lone untouched rose.
Near it, together, and forever asleep,
Lay two of my German foes.

Half buried they were, in the dust and dirt,
Bodies crushed, their souls long flown.
In their sleep they smiled, forgetting the day,
Unmoved by the wind's low moan.

One lay with his hand stretched toward the rose,
As though his final wish had been
To find in its petals some word from the land,
That never again would he ken.

Standing there, I thought of the ache
His folks would feel when full sure
That the boy whose being they so carefully wrought,
Was now but one price of the War.

Then, a shell bursting near knocked me down,
And my hand touched that of the Hun!
Gripping it tight! My emotions exploded!
Laugh! If you think it was fun.

I jumped to my feet and hurried away,
Plucking the rose as I left,
'Twas the one thing of beauty in that desolate street,
Of all other beauties bereft.

Thus ends the story, such as it was,
Of the last rose of Picardy, somewhhere in France.
Its sweet scent has gone, but in my memory yet,
Burns clearly that sad "day of chance".

Gnr. C.J. Cate—#536636
Canadian Expeditionary Force
Vrely, France, 1918

1970 - Granddad Tells a Tale

-I-

Listen my lad - and I'll tell you a tale,
Of a time when more faces than mine grew pale.
'Twas down on the Somme - that last little stunt,
The beginning of which began Fritz's last grunt.
Our guns were silent for the time, you see,
But not so old Boche, who was busy's could be.
My mates were all weary - and shaky as me,
And it wasn't the shells - from them we were free.
That which we needed was just over the wire,
But between us and it was Jerry's hot fire.
All day we had watched for a bit of a slump,
But the sun began sinking with him still on the jump.
So our hopes went down — we'd all done our best,
Though 'twas plain that the night would send us all "West".

-II-

"I say ! I've a hunch ! On the right of that slope !
I'm off to it boys — 'tis our one and last hope !"
And away goes the speaker, a man of two score,
With a home in God's country - and kiddies four.
Yet here in this hell with so much at stake
He risks losing them all for his gun crew's sake.
He's running - ducking - and now's by the slope,
Full half past the wire is our one and last hope.
And now ! He is through it ! And over clear ground
He's beating the splinters, bound after bound.

Good God ! What's that ! Beside him a thud !
That shell has got him - No - NO! It's a DUD!
Now then the smoke blots him clean out o'sight
But our hero has WON the first half of his fight.

-III-

"Well - it's over I guess, for our hope isn't back.
With the night closed in, blacker than black,
And now - hear you that?" "ACTION ! S.O.S.!"
We've no heart for such a thing, of strength we have less,
Yet somewhere off there in this black inky night,
With our lads in the outposts, Jerry's starting a fight.
The quick-release sticks ! My breach - damn, she's stiff !
My tubes are all wet ! That's GAS ! Get that whiff !
Good Lord, what's next . . . "Here's your lanyard old man",
And into the gun-pit - thank Heaven - jumps Dan.
And - with him the *F A G S* ! Away goes the gloom,
As away go our shells bringing Kultur its doom."

Finis - (Gi' me a light!)
Rosieres Forward,
(Vrely) September, 1918.

When the 12th left Vrely for "down the line" and a rest, there were many new faces with her, for the Somme drive, like every other great success, had been heavily paid for. Back over the route by which we had come into Vrely rolled the 3rd Brigade, with every kilo covered bringing us nearer to the final grand drive, though few of us realized just "how final" that drive was to be. When the noise of battle had become but a distant rumble, the column halted on the south bank of the Somme, near Longeau. Everywhere about us a wealth of restful country atmosphere: stately trees, green fields and hedges, wild flowers in blossom, singing birds, and thru it all the quiet Somme flowing slowly along its route to the sea. The war "seemed" far away, but close inspection brought forth blasted tree stumps, barbed wire entanglements, trenches, and machine gun emplacements, for we were not far from Amiens. Nature's brave attempt at hiding those gruesome scars called for fertile land, and that luxurious green received its nourishment from a soil saturated with the blood of warriors not so long ago.

Along the south bank of the river crowded the troops, washing clothes, cleaning equipment, and enjoying much needed baths. With my wash spread out to dry, I left the column with the "Big 4" to explore the opposite bank of the river. On and on we rambled over rolling hills and thru sweet scented valleys. All along the way finding blackberries and raspberries growing luxuriously. Perfectly ripened and our own for the taking. We came upon a gully thru which ran a railroad, crossed over it, and saw Longeau Station far down the stretch of shining rails. Gaining the tip of one incline we came upon a large plain, on which were gathered hundreds—perhaps thousands—of captured German guns. There were machine guns, field pieces, howitzers, lights, heavies, mortars, the famous "whiz-bang", the anti-aircraft guns, the deadly 5.9 and many more. They were silent there, but what death-dealing missiles had belched forth from those yawning muzzles! What price the prize! How many of the aching hearts in America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, British Isles, South Africa, India, France, Belgium, Germany, and God alone knows where else, could trace the cause of the ache to those very guns! Seeing them we shuddered! It is not wise, sometimes, to think.

Back to the business of teaching the Hun that no one nation can enforce its own idea of rule upon the world. The 12th was entering upon its last drive, its longest and costliest drive, which was to end with the declaring of an armistice, with the battery not far from Mons, Belgium, about ninety miles away. Into old territory we went. Arras—and on to Caigncourt, pounding away at the Boche day and night, ever closer to the confluence of the Hindenburg, Fresnes-Rouvroy, and Drocourt-Queand Lines, the fortified Canal du Nord, Bourlon, and Cambrai. At times it seemed as though the 12th would soon have all new faces, for Fritz's fire was hotter than anything we had seen. No one was excused. On one occasion as I ran thru a courtyard in which were two 9.2's firing from behind a brick wall, the Boche dropped a single shell so close that the burst killed fourteen and wounded the remaining seven of the men on duty there. It was about this time that the "Big 4" lost its first member, as Bosdet went down the line with a shattered knee.

The 12th moved on. Once again the long lines of wounded men streaming by us, the dead lying everywhere, the wrecked tanks, lorries, guns, and all the rest. Grave digging resulted in such heavy strafing from our "friend" across the way that we were forced to be content with throwing a few shovelfuls of turf over bodies. Always included with the word "army" were the horse and the mule, eternally suffering in silence and always true to the trust placed upon them. Now their torn and shattered bodies could only be dragged to shell holes and old trenches, tipped in, and thinly covered with dirt. The variety of scents was surprising in its strength.

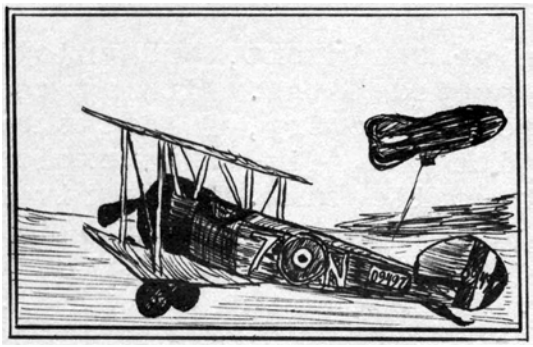
THE EYES OF THE ARTILLERY.

As on the Amiens drive, there were continuous battles in the air. Sometimes there were so many planes involved that it was impossible to tell which side shot down the greater number. The danger from falling pieces of shells from our own antiaircraft fire was on the increase. Yet, very calmly did the observation balloons make their daily trips above, long lines of them, indifferent to enemy airmen. Too often, as the flaming streaks of deadly tracer bullets reached the gasbags, there followed a puff of smoke, and the balloon would rise suddenly, jerking at its cable, then burst into flame. Bag, basket, and cable shot earthward, leaving behind a trail of smoke and sparks, and one or more observers hanging limp from parachutes.

At noon on the 3rd of October, with the battle noises quieter than usual, I sat on the raised edge of "A" crew's dugout bathing my feet. A few yards to my right the rest of the boys were getting their noon rations. One lad (Graham, I think) had just passed in front of me carrying a bucket of tea and a "hunk" of bread in one hand, and balancing a pan of soup and a cover on which a boiled potato and some queer looking mush had been placed, in the other. The whine of a shell reached our ears—but of course, as every old-timer knows, the "ones you hear never hit you". This, however, was one exception to that rule. An instant of the whining, which became a roar, and then....

As the roaring sound in my ears became more defined, I knew that someone was moaning. Then I knew that there were many different groanings and moanings. Suddenly I realized that I, too, was groaning. So I ceased. Opening my eyes I saw, as in a dream, the familiar surroundings of our position, with the ground strewn with bodies, some moving a little, others still. The blackness again. I returned to consciousness, and immediately felt that my back was on fire. That I was about to die, I had no doubt. Placing my hand at my back, I felt but a slippery surface (never realizing that my tunic, shirt, and undershirt had been ripped away), and then my convictions that the war was over for me were strengthened when I saw my hand covered with blood. Again I looked about—some of the bodies were now on hands and knees. One only was upright, and that belonged to Graham, who stood astride one mate who would never move again. Graham's left hand and arm hung limp, but his right hand still held an empty and battered mess-tin. His face wore a most bewildered look as his eyes gazed upon the rest of us. Over against a gun wheel, one of the boys had been propped by Fisher or Cameron, and was being given first aid treatment. Then I crawled on hands and knees into our old dugout—not aware of the fact that I was crawling thru a space where a few moments before had been some three feet of sandbags and several thicknesses of elephant iron. Then darkness for the third time.

When I finally regained my senses, one of our officers was trying to do something to my back. He asked me how I felt, and I told him that I was fine. Then he informed me that my back had been stripped of clothing as well as some flesh.



After a rest, I walked to a field dressing station with Bdr. Budd, in whose breast was a tiny red hole. At the dressing station, two orderlies picked a neat pile of steel and gravel from my back, painted most of me with iodine, gave me an inoculation, and tying me up, ordered me to lie down to await an ambulance. For some time I slept. On awakening I saw that the sun was low in the west and remembered that I had had nothing to eat since morning. Beside me was a 12th non-com, who said as soon as he saw me awake, that if it was "jake-a-loo" with me, he for one was ready to return to the battery. I asked him about the dressing on his neck, but he seemed to think that it was nothing serious, so we started back to the guns. Almost back, Cameron, white faced and much out of breath, met us, and commenced cursing me roundly. "Why did you go away without letting me know about it? They told me that you were killed. Damn you, I've a mind to give you a good licking!" But I never got the "licking" and Cam was not as angry with me as he appeared. At the battery we ate, and as we ate I learned what the 12th had suffered from that one lone 5.9 that had entered so suddenly into our dugout. Several days later our Medical Officer removed more steel from various parts of my anatomy. Luckily these tiny splinters had not entered very deep.

GHOULISH NIGHTMARES OF 1917.

On the first of October the Canadian Artillery fired seven thousand tons of shells. It was a busy day for the 12th. Moving forward to a position on the plains before Haynecourt, "A" and "B" guns were driven past their point of departure from the main road, and after questioning several runners met on the highway, discovered they were very much lost. The "Big 4" less Bosdet, rode in the first lorry, and until shaken awake by an abrupt halt, were sleeping peacefully. An unexpected reply was given to our officer's request for directions which, as near as we could find out, was to the effect that we would reach the German lines in about

eight minutes, if we kept on as we were headed. Our informer could not guarantee that our reception among the Hun would be particularly pleasant. In fact, he was surprised that we had not already drawn fire. In the act of turning about, the drone of German bombing planes reached us. This, added to the proximity of German machine gunners who no doubt were enjoying our predicament, did not raise our spirits any. Suddenly all was as light as day. The flyers had dropped flares, and we were in plain view. We scattered from the lorries which were loaded with shells and ammunition, and very liable to create quite a racket if hit by bombs. I fell flat on my face in the shallow gutter by the roadside, and there awaited the first bomb—the others I never expected to hear. Someone said something about, "Good-bye France—Hello Satan!" And then came the dread whistle of descending trouble. Cr-r-ump! Cr-r-ump! Crump! Crump! The air was split with the shock of the exploding bombs. The stench which always follows after heavy explosions stung our nostrils. Steel flew in all directions. Then the flares went out, and the planes flew on, evidently too sure that we were wiped out to stop to look. Three minutes later we were hitting a wild course for "down the line" without having suffered a single casualty. In a short while we had located our position and were placing our guns. (What a celebration for one's birthday—October 2nd!) Later in the day I was sent back to our last position with a message to bring up the rest of the battery. On the return to "A" gun I came across a young German officer, stretched out on his back, with a bullet hole thru his head. The corner of a black-bordered envelope bearing a letter that began, "Mein Lieber Fritz" protruded from his tunic pocket. This I took, wondering what the folks at home were writing to their soldiers of the Rhineland.

About the sixth of October, "A" and "B" guns again moved forward. This time to a position on the outskirts of Haynecourt. As the time drew near for us to open fire the OIC became worried about ammunition, which should have reached the position about the time we did. Lt. Palmer asked Sgt. Troop for a runner. Troop asked Number One of "A" crew (Cameron), and he in turn looked at me. As a gunner I had no one to "pass the buck" on to, and so was "it". My job was to locate the "ammo" train wherever it might be, and direct it to our position, in other words, "Get to that 'ammo' gunner, and get it up here—Snap!" No directions. No suggestions. I remembered having read somewhere something about a "Message to Garcia", and felt slightly important for a very few moments. Darkness, strange country, and weird sounds, soon knocked the "importance" out of me, and I placed my whole thoughts on the route I had chosen. At a crossroads I decided my turn, by remembering which way I had been thrown when our lorry had skidded around the corner for a rutted banking on the left, as on the trip up

our lorry had been in trouble getting from a field into the road. I found the spot on my right. Here I met a battalion of Territorials coming in, and at a curve in the road, the Hun caught them with shrapnel, raising havoc. Those who could, carried on, those others just helped each other as best they could. Locating the road over which we had passed thru the field, I commenced to run, for the shrapnel and light shells were close. In the dark I ran onto a dead horse, whose rear legs were stretched out across my path. In falling I lost my helmet, and received a mouth full of dirt, and ran on, coughing, spitting, swearing, sweating, and ducking. This "Message to Garcia" stuff makes fine reading, and right there it stops. Of course the train was eventually reached, a message hurriedly delivered to Lt. Bacon in charge, and the trip back to the guns commenced. Back over the route by which I had come I directed the driver of the first lorry. Always on the watch for trouble, I was surprised when after covering more that half the distance, nothing had "dropped" within a mile of us. Just before reaching the crossroads a few shells landed on our right, and our driver was hit. Beyond the turn, all was quiet, but a sting in the air told of many shells which had burst there not long before. Just as we reached our destination Fritz found us with everything he had. Shells, fuses, and charges were dumped out of the lorries into one big heap. With the motors out of the way, Right Section "opened up" and for several hours fought an artillery duel with Fritz. Despite a severe shelling I do not believe we lost a single man that wild night.

Behind the remains of an old wall all six guns of the 12th were pulled into position for the great effort to straighten the line before Cambrai. The famous Hindenburg, and southern Drocourt-Queant lines, and Canal du Nord fortifications had crumbled, as the Canadians advanced nearly twenty miles between August 25th and October 2, south of the Sensee River. The double defense systems to the north of the river were still German. The loop thus formed left us in position with German fire reaching us from every point of the compass between southeast and northwest via north. It was indeed an unhealthy sector. The enemy clung desperately to all he had, using in his struggle every device known to modern warscience to hold back a determined army. On the 8th the 12th fired steadily all day

and night. About midnight Jerry placed a shell in our "ammo" dump, setting it afire. The blaze was a big one, and a hot one, and drew fire heavier than ever for the remainder of the night. A salvo of two shells falling between "E" and "F" guns wiped both crews off the battery strength. Men were taken from the other guns to keep Left Section in action, and the battery "carried on" as though nothing had happened. Twenty minutes of tying up wounded, and moving dead, were all that was necessary to satisfy any normal man that civilization had not yet reached a point to boast about. Cambrai was in flames, but the red glow which lit up the sky for many miles, was no greater than the red stain of blood which soaked into the fields of Flanders during that drive.... The Canadians entered Cambrai at 1:30 AM on October 9th.

The battery moved to Epinoy, then on to Blecourt, and from there Right Section headed for an advanced position at Eswars. En route the Hun caught us in the light of mid-afternoon in an open field. We must have presented a perfect target for he let us have everything that could be shot from a gun. The leading lorry was hit and stalled, and the whole party stopped. We scattered for shelter, through a hail of steel which hissed and screeched, and sent dust and dirt flying. The field was dotted with little one-man "rat holes" no more than eighteen inches deep, and shell holes of various dimensions. Into these we threw ourselves, often onto the dead bodies of Heinies. From one hole to another we ducked, as our hunches demanded, usually just in time to escape being blown skyward with the shelter just vacated. It was a hectic game of tag, which must have harassed our guardian angels aplenty. After some minutes, with fire increasing, two of the boys jumped into a lorry apiece and we moved on. Before us a deadly curtain of high explosives blocked our entrance onto a little village, but behind—and on both sides—things were as bad, so we kept going. Into the village over the wreck of a road we bounced, with shells churning the ground until it seemed boiling. The din was terrific. Dust and smoke hid the sun. Splintered steel, rocks, pieces of wood, and a lot of most everything filled the air. The canvas, as well as the woodwork on the lorries, was ripped to pieces, but the motors continued to function. Out of the village—on to our selected position, and not a man lost! (Talk about the "luck of the navy"!) But luck, in war, is only temporary as I soon discovered.

With "A" and "B" guns in position, the crews went to work digging their fire trenches (emergency "covers") ten feet long by two feet deep. "A" crew dug down about two, only to find the hole flooding with water. Abandoning the trench, we found a dry ditch about fifteen yards ahead of the gun, and into it we dropped for some sleep before ordered to "Action". One man was left on watch for SOS signals from the trenches ahead, and for gas. At twelve o'clock McNutt woke me for the next two hour stretch. As I rolled out of my blanket, he rolled in, mumbling something about some neighboring batteries opening up during the last hour, and that probably I would get an SOS soon.

Standing erect, the upper half of my body was above the top of the ditch, and although it was too dark to see my comrades less than five feet away I knew that there was nothing before me to prevent my seeing the expected SOS. Several batteries of eighteen pounders were firing at intervals not far off. Occasional bursts of machine gun or rifle fire added their quotas of disturbance to the night. Now and then Jerry dropped a few shells in the vicinity, and his planes sent down a few bombs. All over the sector there was evidence of life. Now and then Heinie would send up his "onion-strings" in the hope of bringing down one of our planes in flames, and the long rows of white balls of fire would sail crazily through the air until burnt out. Vrery lights, flares, and varicolored signals flashed up from time to time. Single lights, and lights on strings—white, green, yellow, red, or blue—but the signal for which I watched was three balls of fire in a vertical line—*red over red over red*. Seconds after sighting it my gun would be surrounded by action. Seconds more, and our shells would be hissing on to prearranged targets. But no such signal came during my watch. The time dragged on, the war-sounds continued, the rumble of distant guns, a more defined boom of nearer artillery, the crack of rifles—sometimes almost dying out, and then increasing to a steady rattle, every now and then the sudden uneven "rat-a-tat-tat-tata" of machine guns, the crash of shells landing (some near, some far) and their various warnings as they tore thru the air, the even purr of our planes and the uneven whine—increasing to a roar as they passed overhead—of the Hun planes, followed by the "K-R-R-UMP! KRUMP!" of their bombs after they had whistled their way to earth, and finally, the dull "pouf" of our anti-aircraft shells as they exploded far up along the powerful beams of light from the searchlights.... Many noises. But none of particular interest to the man on watch, yet he listened intently for one special sound, as he watched for the SOS—the sound created by a certain shell exploding with less force than the others. The dread gas shell. The night was a bit chilly, and the man on watch turned his coat collar higher about his neck. It was also a bit lonely as he hummed a song of the British Tommy:

"Good-by-ee, don't cry-ee. There's
a silver lining in the sky-ee. If a
9 point 2——gets a line on you,
Its a case of Napoo! Good-by-ee!"

A red—yellow glare! A choking sensation! A gasped warning true to habit, well drilled, of: "GAS! GAS! GA_!" Then,———-!!

Short flashes of consciousness left me with some knowledge of what happened after the first sudden shock: Being carried on a stretcher—a night a million years long in the skeleton of some old building with the wind and shell splinters whistling thru it—an awakening to hear faint voices—a hazy suspicion of a sunny morning—a miserable ambulance ride—an overcrowded dressing station—another ride—a field hospital where someone did several things to me—more riding—a restless night at a (#22 Canadian) clearing station—a ride in a much crowded, badly heated box car full of groans, prayers, and curses—more handling—more riding—more night—and a sleep that must have lasted for many hours, for when I awoke I felt myself between clean bedclothes, and these on a real bed (hospital cot). Just what occurred in the next few days I do not know. It was the 10th of October when I left the 12th Battery at Eswars, and at least the 16th before I knew for a certainty just what "it was all about". Doctors and nurses worked at their best at #4 General Hospital at Camieres, and their charges recovered because of that fact, or died, but not for want of attention. For some time the wonderful quiet of the ward disturbed me more than it rested me, for it was difficult to realize that for me, there was to be no more of shells, gas, mud, bugs, bombs, filth, action, or in fact, much of anything until the "MO"s decided that I was once more fit for active duty in the line.

(Note: During the last few months of the war, gas was nearly always present in quantity more or less severe, making it necessary to wear masks for hours at a time while hard at work on the guns, either moving or firing. A most uncomfortable though necessary condition.... The shell mentioned above, detonated on the edge of the ditch directly in front of me, without warning. CJC)

[In another letter home following the gassing at Eswers the author's treatment of his injuries was typically lighthearted—although subsequent transfers to two additional convalescent camps while many of his fellow casualties were being returned to duty kept him "in hospital" until discharged on November 15, whereupon he bounced back and forth between convalescent camps until finally, in December, instead of transferring home, he found his way back to the 12th, then stationed in Belgium. CCC]

October 16, 1918
No. 4 General Hospital, B.E.F., France

Dearest Grandma—

Above all do not be frightened because my heading includes a hospital. True I did not come here by choice, but since I am here, and am out of bed again and running around as usual in my hospital suit of blue, am getting the best rest I have had for months. Reason for my winding up at the base is due to a very light touch of gas—one of Fritz's weapons of war which without breaking any bones sure breaks a fellow's heart for awhile. However under care of the finest of Briton's doctors and nurses a fellow is soon out of bed and ready for business. And speaking of beds—can you imagine the comfort of a soft, clean, white bed after months of hard, dirty and scarcely white bunks found "up the line"? No madam, instead of worrying about my state of health—just assure yourself that the comforts derived from being here are almost worth the discomfort endured at first.

The country about here is very different from any I have met with in France since en route to our first position. The hospital is pretty well surrounded with big hills—have not dimbed them yet, but if they keep me here a day or two longer I'll know what is on the other side by seeing it from the top. As is my walks have been only along the different walks and roads near my own ward,—from the top of any of these hills I should be able to get a fine view.

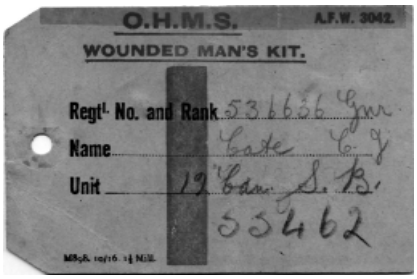
Yesterday while finishing a letter to Mother one of my mates who came down the line with me but who got separated at the C.C.G., walked up and I learned that we have been in the same ward all the time. Our luck is poor there tho—for mate goes off to Blighty while I remain (so far as I know) at the Base.

Speaking of meeting mates—old timers—yesterday was my big day. During a walk to the Church Army Hut I met a fellow in Yankee uniform who looked natural—he seemed to think I looked familiar as well—and before we had spoken we knew each other—he was a member of the 1st Mass. Amb. Corps in Boston—and we were side numbers on the same ambulance at Framingham. A good chat resulted.

All manner of British troops are in this ward—thus plenty of life and humor to pass away the time. Furthermore, breakfast is up and my appetite is as lively as ever—both you and Aunt May know the meaning of that. So love to the both of you and regards to folks interested.

Write soon, Clifton

There did not seem to be much left for me to worry about, so I got busy worrying about "A" gun, the rest of the "Big 4", my pack of souvenirs left behind, and the condition of my ward mates. Most of them were worse off by far than myself, for in some hour of the night, a Canadian flag or the Union Jack, was sure to be draped over the bed of more than one broken soldier. For several days I felt sure that I was going to be blind, but the worries turned to other things when my sight proved to be as fine as ever. A man with a slight ankle wound and a moderate dose of gas should keep in rather good spirits when he sees on all sides men without arms, legs, or with artificial bones in their bodies, laughing and joking, and even smiling when in pain. Once, "Dutchy" Dodge, a nurse "back in the States" had said on learning I had joined the Ambulance Corps, "I am glad that you are going over to do constructive work...." I failed in my original purpose (that is, to attempt to relieve pain rather than to inflict it) when I left the Medical Corps for the Artillery, but "Dutch" would have given anything she had to have been in some hospital in France, had it not been for a leaky heart valve.


O.H.M.S. A.F.W. 3042.
WOUNDED MAN'S KIT.
Regtl. No. and Rank 53636 Gnr.
Name Cate C. G.
Unit 12 Can. S. B.
53462

To prompt and proper treatment my system responded as it should. I soon sat up—stood up—walked. Then I received mail from home that was more than welcome. It seems that Mother had been notified that her son had been "killed in action", but an efficient Red Cross Service soon assured her of the true state of affairs.

My first day out-of-doors was blessed with a blue sky and a warm sun. I felt so good that I ran after a football which came rolling by me, kicked from a nearby field. That little bit of exertion sent me back to bed for a few days. Then my interest turned to a certain nurse and her dog "Dinkems", with the result that I regained my lost strength all too rapidly, and was slated to go to #6 Convalescent Camp at Etaples. The following day, which was about the ninth of November, I was transferred to #12 Camp on the heights near Wimereux and the sea. Here I remained until fit for travel, when I was to be shipped back to Etaples en route for "Blighty". "Blighty", by the way, is England.

[Toward the end of his convalescence a touch of weariness or melancholia seeps into his correspondence... or perhaps he is just eager to get on with things. CCC]

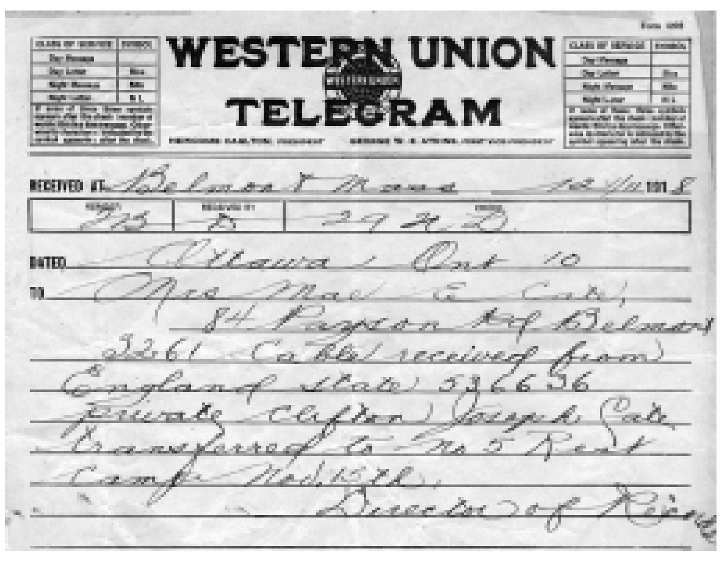
S company, #12 Convalescent Camp
B.E.F. France. 8/11/18 [*Nov. 8, 1918*]

Dearest Grandma:

Have not heard from Berwick for a long time—is everyone well as usual? Even Mildred has deserted me or else has not received my letters of Sept 15th and October 17th. However I can forgive her all if you will just drop a few lines now.

The weather here has been of the dampest—plenty of mud and other accessories to weeks of rain. Today however dawned with a frost covering everything in the open—our tent flap crackled and snapped in fine style when we hopped out of our warm blankets at reveille. The sun got to work early and all bids fair to be dry and fine by night. It is so clear now that we can see for miles out on the Atlantic from our camp on a coast hill. The smacks and steamers seem to forget that there is a war on—they with the calm manner which the few farmers about here are hauling in their turnips or preparing the ground for next spring produce such a peaceful appearance that the spirit of the troops is high. Not only that but the chalk cliffs of Dover—across the channel are very plain today—hundreds of lads whose homes are in Blighty are cheered by that sight—tho the camp spirit here is of the best—all the rain in France can't quench their feeling.

The proper amount of physical training and the afternoon hikes are making us more fit for the line than we were when we came down. Good food and plenty of



WESTERN UNION
TELEGRAM

RECEIVED AT Belmont Mass 1918

DATED Ottawa Ont 10

TO Mrs Mae E Cate,
84 Payson Rd Belmont

3261 Cable received from
England states 536656
Private Clifton Joseph Cate
transferred to No 5 Rest
Camp Nov 15th.
Director of Records

sleep are also great factors in the freshness of our health. These things with regular passes to town and the numerous manners of recreation are making me feel better than ever—so much so that the doctor will soon decide that my wounds are completely healed and away on the job I'll go, and ready for anything too since a better rest and change I have not had for months.

Naturally in the hospital I made acquaintances which came in handy when we reached our convalescent camp—now all of them have returned to duty but me—however I have the companionship of several other Canadians so we are well away.

Wish I could spend this Thanksgiving with you—however next year either that or Xmas day will be spent at #16 Bell St.

Since this letter will be the nearest to Xmas of any, accept my love and best wishes for a Merry one now. [running out of ink, he continues in pencil] (Ink gone!) Of course this includes Aunt Mary—her hens and your kittens!!

Regards to Shoreys and other friends interested.

Love, Clifton

From time to time I got reports from the battery, either by official communication posted on the bulletin boards, letters from old mates, or other casualties. There seemed to be no doubt that the drive toward Belgium was still going on, and that the Canadians with the British, French, and American troops were surely tying up the Hun. Following the occupation of Cambrai on October 9th, Douai had fallen on the 17th, and then Ypres, Lille, and Ostend were also won. The old city of Valenciennes fell into our hands after much severe fighting thus ensuring, from the first of November, a rapid advance to the Franco-Belge frontier. Countless stories of the great work of the Canadians came to my ears, as they overcame all obstacles—flooded areas—bridgeless streams—"booby traps"—relentless rifle fire—holding together their means of communication by a superhuman effort as they advanced mile after mile over ruined country, much of it under water and practically impassable. We had suffered heavy losses, of course, but the enemy had suffered more. They staged many strong counterattacks, gaining back a little ground only to lose it forever shortly after. One report showed that in one small section of the battlefield near Aulnoy, over 800 Germans were killed by artillery fire alone (most of this wrought by forty-two six-inch howitzers, including those of the 12th). Thousands of prisoners were in our hands. At the end of October the Canadian Corps alone, was feeding and caring for over 75,000 liberated French civilians, whose homes (whole towns as well as the surrounding countryside) had

been wantonly destroyed by the retreating Hun. The wild manifestations of the civilians' joy at our successes were becoming more and more pronounced, often causing much embarrassment to troops who were surrounded and clung to, even while in the act of ousting enemy soldiers and while under heavy shellfire of high explosives and gas. After Valenciennes the enemy's withdrawal became more rapid, and on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th of November, our mates took Sebourg, Angreau, Roisin, St. Waast, and crossed the Belgian frontier. On the 6th Quievrechain was captured after stiff fighting, and progress was made along the Conde Canal. Floods and bad roads were causing more hindrance than the German army, but by the 9th, Tertre, Boussu, Jemappe, and Maubeuge were in our grip. German flags were being torn from their standards daily, to be replaced by the Union Jack and the Tricolors of France or Belgium. On the 10th, at Le Verrerie Chatear, were some of the same troops harassing a beaten enemy that suffered from that same enemy's hands in August, 1914 at the same place. On the 11th Mons was in the charge of Canadians, and as the 11th Canadian Corps Headquarters was established in the Grande Place, Sir Douglas Haig's last communiqué was sent out: "Canadian troops of the First Army have captured Mons." By eleven o'clock in the morning our line had been pushed to a point seven kilometers east of Mons. In two months the Canadians had won three great battles: Amiens, Arras, and Cambrai. They had captured over 28,000 prisoners, 501 guns, 3,000 machine guns, much needed supplies, 69 towns and villages, 175 square miles of territory, and defeated decisively 47 German Divisions. In other words, Britain's North American Dominion, had proved quite a help to the Mother Country. A long looked for message was finally received at Headquarters, which read, "HOSTILITIES CEASE AT 11:00 HOURS, NOV. 11, STAND FAST ON LINE REACHED AT THAT HOUR." An answering message of recognition read: "Warning order re-cessation of hostilities received. Thanks."

(Note: Foch's original message to his generals was: "Hostilities will cease on the whole front on November 11, at eleven o'clock. The Allied troops will not, until further orders, go beyond the line reached at that hour." CJC*)*

The morning of November 11th, found our tents at #12 Convalescent Camp stuffy with dampness. Outside, the sun was hidden by a cold drizzle. Most of us poked our heads out of the tents to turn back with a mean "grouch" well underway. Call to breakfast failed to excite interest. Persistent rumors of an armistice evoked no response. About eleven in the morning a few gathered near the canteen to hear the Armistice Order read by the Camp Commandant, and to hear prayers offered by the Chaplain. I heard no cheering, and saw no signs of great joy. When

one man shouted, "Great God, Boys! It's all over! Don't you get it?"—There was no answer. Some of the boys returned to their games. Some went back to the canteen for their beer and light lunch. Here and there were gathered little groups discussing the possibility of truth in the report with slight interest. The whole world was going crazy with joy—up in the line the boys had started a cheer that had grown to a deafening roar—but here at "Con. Camp" the thing failed to go "so big". It mattered "ALL", and yet "not at all". The stupendous meaning of that order did not get "home" because as more than one fellow expressed it, "Aw Hell! In what latrine did they start that rumor?" Gradually, however, as the hours passed, I noticed a new expression coming over the faces about me, and by the time we received word that we were free for twenty-four hours, to go and do as we pleased, we knew that "something" had happened. There was much grumbling at the luck that had kept us out of the line at the finish, and I for one, would have given much to be with the 12th at that moment.

At dusk as I walked into the sea town of Boulogne along with the crowd from surrounding camps, I was startled at the sight of open lights. A new condition—for there would be no air raid that night. The "MPs" (which means Military Police, and some other things) had suddenly and mysteriously disappeared, and it was just as well, for on the hike from camp I had overheard many sinister threats cast in their direction, as well as some reference to a certain incident earlier in the war which occurred at Etaples, and in which some British MPs and some wounded "Jocks" had played a prominent part. In the town, all was wildest confusion, representing celebration. The civilians had gone wild, and they were joined in impromptu parades by uniformed "Frogs", "Limeys", "Jocks", "Canucks", "Aussies", Anzacs", "Southies", "Yanks", sailors, nurses, "WAACs", and all manner of servicemen and girls. Even the dogs yelped with the shouting humanity. Men, women, wine, song, et. al., joined in one great jubilee. The "time" was "NOW"—what <u>of</u> the regrets of an unknown "tomorrow"? Thru the noisy mobs, I pushed my way to the best restaurant in town, previously "For Officers Only", held up every few steps by some man or maid to receive my allotment of hugs and kisses. At the restaurant things were happening. The big plate glass windows in front had been smashed to bits. The "For Officers Only" sign had been trampled under foot. A battle royal was in progress between those inside, mostly officers and their female companions, and those outside, mostly privates and civilians of both sexes. With the attackers I threw my weight—fighting, kicking, pounding, and laughing against the others. Slowly, we fought our way into the room. The month of ease had softened me, and just before I "passed out of the picture", I saw an Australian Major and a private of a Canadian-Scottish Battalion, pounding each other heartily on their respective jaws, grinning broadly all the while. Coming back to my

senses inside the restaurant I found my head resting in one ma'mselle's lap, while another was pouring champagne in the general direction of my mouth. Sitting up, I received a cheer, for no good reason at all, except that the fair maid with the champagne improved her aim with invigorating liquid. On a nearby table danced a bright eyed girl, who was suddenly carried away in the arms of the Australian officer of previous mention. Up onto the table jumped a "doughboy" waving an American flag. Under his leadership was sung every national anthem known to the universe, actually including "The Watch on the Rhine". I decided to wait until quiet was restored and then enjoy the balance of the evening with my lady of the champagne. But there was no quiet that night—which of course did not prevent my enjoying myself.

At daybreak of the 12th, I was plodding toward camp in a heavy rain. My veins seemed ready to burst. My whole body burned with a fever. My brain was not functioning as I knew it should, though it did tell me that I should have taken the advice of my friend of the night before and remained in town another night. The close of my "armistice account" will be retold as my London Regiment friend told it to me at a later date: "About 4 AM you came stumbling into our tent and asked if the boys were all back. Two were still missing so we started out to find them. It was raining harder than ever when we reached the first *estaminet* on the road to Boulogne. To offset your fever we decided on cognac, and so went to the cafe entrance. Here we found a big "Jock" arguing with the proprietress who wanted to close up. The "Jock" objected. She attempted to push him thru the door, and he grabbed a bottle and took aim for the big mirror behind the bar. You jumped for him, and pulled the bottle out of his hand. Just then another "Jock" bounced a bottle off your head and you "flopped". I was carrying you away when both "Jocks" jumped on me—and that's all I remember."

As it happened, the same two mates for whom we had started a search, located us, and brought us both back to camp. It was several days before normal routine was restored, and all hands accounted for. In camp there was little for me to do but enjoy myself as best I might with lacrosse, or other sports. The "Crown and Anchor" games, "500", "cribbage", and the old standby, "poker", passed away many hours of the nights. In spite of all I might find to do, however, time began to drag, and though I was subject to fainting spells at every slight overexertion, my condition was much improved.

For weeks I had been homesick for the 12th. Where was it? What was it doing? How about the boys of Right Section? Was the "Big 4" still represented in "A" gun's crew? Fisher had been in the ditch with me on the night of October 10th, and Cameron had not been far away—what of them? The few letters received from men of the 3rd Brigade had not mentioned either Cameron or the "Dreamer".

On November 15th I was moved to #7 Ration Depot at Boulogne; on the 17th, to the South Camp at Etaples, on the 26th to Marenla (CCRC-4thDiv), and on the 5th December to Aubin St. Vaast (CCRC-2ndDiv). Not very long after reaching Aubin St. Vaast, a party was drawn up to be sent on to "Blighty" by way of Etaples. I was in that party.

Etaples was quite a railroad center, and a little information quietly gathered showed me in which direction the trains went bound for Arras. Next I deserted the party to which I had been attached, and stowed away on a train going "up the line". Arras was easily reached, and I went on toward Cambrai without stopping to look up old friends. At Cambrai I could learn nothing of the whereabouts of the battery, but found plenty of "MPs" willing to arrest me on general principles. The trek to Valenciennes was a long, slow, hard battle. Of food I found aplenty—but transportation was scarce, and I was not feeling as healthy as when I left. I spent some time in this old town trying to gain some word of the 12th, but to no avail. Eventually, I decided to go on to Mons, in Belgium, where I felt certain that there would be someone to direct a weary traveler. Then my luck asserted itself. As I trudged along a muddy road, a lorry passed me, and on the wide panel at the driver's seat I saw painted a six-inch shell, upon which was a big Figure 3. A 3rd Brigade Canadian Artillery ration lorry I guessed, and the 12th was part of the 3rd. As fast as heavy feet could carry me I ran shouting after the lorry, but it soon passed out of hearing. Uncertain whether to laugh or cry, I stalked grimly along. My feet and legs were carrying twice their own weight of mud. My every muscle ached. But I had gained one thing, and that the knowledge that our ration lorries came to Valenciennes for their supplies and mail. About an hour later I again saw the same lorry, parked outside a ration depot. I charged toward it, and there before me was Bombardier Holmes, ration orderly of the 12th. Confronting him I spoke (I wanted to embrace and kiss him!). For an instant he stared at me, then said, "Cate! Well I'll be damned! I thought you were—-", but it matters not what he thought. Far more important was the fact that he found room for me in the back of the lorry, and as we rattled and bounced along toward the Belgium border he told me much about the battery.

In an old convent in Boussu, I located the battery, and into a room on the second floor I hurried to greet my old mates. Inside the room I soon became convinced that the Unit marking on the door was wrong, for the six faces about me were not the old familiar faces I had expected to find. Then—the reassuring voice of Cameron, as he bounded into the room. Preliminary greetings over, we visited the other rooms on a hunt for old friends. A general exchange of experiences followed, and I learned that the 12th had played its part well in the great advance, although losses had been heavy. This fact explained the many new faces.

Fisher had "gone down" with me, and reports had it that he had been sent home to Canada, to die there from the effects of gas and wounds. No word had come from Bosdet. Several of those wounded since the commencement of the "Somme do" had found their way back "home" as I had. The 12th was still ready for instant action at a word from higher up.

It was not long before the "SM" sent for me. Reporting to him, I was greeted with, "Gunner, you are not on battery strength. I have had no orders to place you there. Where have you come from? What are you doing here?" Momentarily cheered and strengthened by Cameron and other old mates, the SM's wordy barrage brought back the feeling of exhaustion that had come over me in Valenciennes. The SM was an "old-timer", and presented a hard boiled front, but his heart was in the right place, as subsequent action proved. While I went to bed to sleep off a fever, he took my case before Major McKay, and by morning of the next day I was once again official #2 of Cameron's crew on "A" gun.

The Canadian Army—in Belgium

The fatigues about quarters and guard duty at the gun park were play, but I was surprised to learn that at an early hour every day the brigade must have a dress parade, also that "Rules and Regulations" demanded that the brass on the guns, carriages, and caissons be polished daily. This state of affairs was the cause of much grumbling among the boys. An ordinary parade at a more reasonable hour, and thorough gun cleaning every week, would leave the troops in a much more satisfactory mood. The right to a less strict discipline seemed due to us after many months of severe action. Several of the original members of the 12th spoke of a change to their non-coms and found the latter in accord with their ideas, but the officers were inclined to remind us that "orders are orders". Thus it came about that first one battery, and later the whole brigade, struck to obtain their point. There were threats of arrest for insubordination and refusing duty, but in the end a wise Colonel Beeman made several satisfactory changes.

Boussu was an ordinary Belgium town, of somber aspect, made more so by weary-faced civilians and dreary weather. The Hun had left little of value behind that the townsfolk could gain a living from. Most of the nearby coal mines were flooded, and what few factories might once have existed were then in ruins. The winter season prevented farming. Food was scarce. Daily the bread and soup lines at our kitchens grew longer, as the government communals became greatly overtaxed as civilians crowded back into the district so lately occupied by Fritz. Wearing apparel for all except a few of the "luckier" ma'mselles was a combination of old rags and parts of clothing once worn by Belgian, French, British, Canadian,

American, and German troops. The Army Medical Corps worked hard to keep down disease, aided by the efforts of many thrifty housewives with their well worn scrub brushes. Amusements were severely plain. Of course, the small *estaminets* did a good business with their poorly varied stocks of wines and beers, and their local lady "entertainers".

In spite of all their many hardships, the civilians' hospitality seemed unlimited. Most families had their quota of soldier-friends and visitors, made as welcome as possible. If, in the back of a "civie's" mind was the thought of profit gained thru attention offered, no censor of the fact is admissible, for troops are human beings after all, and to each individual comes first the satisfying of his own personal desires. The truthfully complete story of each soldier- and civilian-life during the war will never be known, and it is better so. The thousands of personal and historical accounts, censored and selected as they are, are sufficient to an imaginative mind. War, at best, is rotten, yet through it all runs a certain indiscernible atmosphere which leaves something missing from every ex-soldier's peacetime life.

Nearly every Belgian youngster made it his proud duty to "adopt" some one of us as his own particular Canadian. One cold and rainy night on guard duty at the gun park, the rain had so soaked my greatcoat that its weight had become burdensome. My cap lay limp upon my head, sending little streams of water down my neck and over my face. My shoes having slopped thru the mud and water along the beat, were soaked thru and heavy. The rifle, its breech protected under my armpit, sent a steady stream of water off its down-pointed muzzle onto my puttees. The canvas-covered guns lay in shadowy rows in the park like many sleeping monsters (which they really were). It was one miserable night. I stopped at the end of my beat to wait for my relief just before two o'clock. A brother sentry splashed and slouched over his route spitting vehemently at every puddle reflecting a bit of light. I dropped the rifle butt to the ground, and rested my weight on my hands, crossed over its muzzle. My thoughts were not of the gun park, Boussu, or Belgium, but of "home". No particular place—just a combination of Sharon, Massachusetts, Berwick, Maine, and East Alton, New Hampshire. Very faintly at first, and then more distinctly I heard a timid voice. I suddenly realized where I was, and saw before me, a small, scantily clad boy of about fourteen (though he looked much less) looking up into my face. His hands rested lightly upon my own.... "Bon soir, Monsieur. Le nuit est mal." Right you are, Sonny. But why are you out so late on such a night?" He told me that he had been watching me for over an hour, waiting for the time when he knew that my relief was due, so that he could invite me to his home for cafe. "Votre mere,—et votre pere?" I asked. "It is all right," I gathered from his native tongue, "You are expected. My father works at the mine. My mama keeps the coffee hot." "And who else?", I asked. "Olga, ma soeur...",

but I interrupted him with, "No. No. Mon ami. Je suis trop fatigue. Un autre nuit, peut-etre." Too many sisters had sent out older or younger brothers with similar invitations, and quite often the results had not been beneficial to good health. My new found friend divined my thoughts and his expression showed plainly his disappointment. He spoke again, his eagerness to make sure that my mind translated his language as he intended, causing him to tremble slightly. "Mais—mon Canadien—vous—no—comprendez. It is not for "that", I invite you. La petite Olga—she is younger than I!" In the end, I agreed to accompany him to his home, and he disappeared into the shadows until I was relieved from my post.

Although officially attached to the guard, and not supposed to leave the guardhouse except on duty, I received permission from the corporal to be absent for an hour. Meeting the young man whose invitation I had accepted, we started for his home which I had thought was within a few steps of the park. For some distance we walked thru the rain. I began to wonder just what sort of a home this fellow lived in, and also where it was. After about twenty minutes of fast walking we reached a long, low, whitewashed building. From a shaded window in the end nearest, shone a dull yellow light. Opening a door, the young man called, "Mama! Le Canadien!" Stooping low so as to miss the low door frame, I followed my guide, and stepping down over one or two stone slabs found myself in a small room. The ceiling and walls were whitewashed, and the floor was of red brick. Two curtained windows I noticed, and two doors, one to the street, and the other (as I learned later) into a tiny bedchamber and another chamber a bit larger. A few old and cheap pictures, a religious illustration, a statue of Mary, and the inevitable crucifix, graced the walls and the mantel over the small open-grate stove. An old sideboard, a closet, a table, several chairs, a few cooking utensils by the stove, and a few dishes on the table, made up the rest of the furnishings.

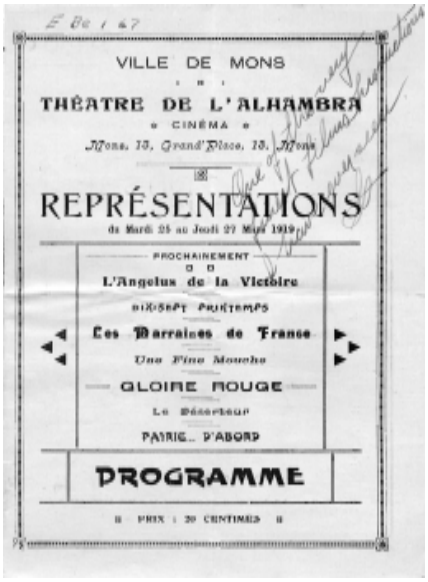
As my young friend hung up my cap and coat on a chair, his mother poured the coffee and produced some dark bread, a saucer containing what looked like lard, and a dish of hard brown lumps. I found that the "lard" was somewhat sweet and meant for the bread, and that the lumps were also sweet and for the coffee. The boy told me to call him Jean, and that his full name was, Jean Baptiste St. Pierre. My name became "Charles", in spite of all my attempts to make him say "Clif". The moments passed. Jean and I had munched the last of the bread, drunk our coffee, and I was about to refill my pipe as the chamber door opened slowly. "Olga!" said the mother quickly, as a tousle-haired girl of eight or nine slipped thru the opening and dashed into the shelter of her mother's dress. There she remained, peeking out from time to time. Conversation was slow. The mother's eyes were ever on the boy, whose gaze never left my face except to study my uniform. My hour was up, and after a hurried promise to return the first time I was

free I returned to the guardhouse. From that time on there were many visits made to Jean's home, and to the homes of several of his relatives. An evening at the home of any, meant an evening filled with many new faces, many old faces, wine, lunch (in which I saw much evidence of our own canteen and kitchen), laughter, music, dancing, and a bit of all around good cheer and friendliness. Often I slept at Jean's home in the tiny chamber off the kitchen-dining-living room. From these visits I learned much about the stay of the Hun, his arrival in 1914, and his leaving not so long before. Jean's cousin, Georgia, who cared for the small store "up the street", provided me with the companionship which helped my stay in Boussu.

(Note: A letter to Jean, sent in care of his father, Monsieur Demonstier Nicolas, #36 Rue Montanbon, Boussu-Bois, Belgium, was never heard from nor was it returned to me. So it seems that my friend of Boussu had left his old home after I reached America. CJC*)*

Shortly before Christmas, the brigade moved to St. Symphorien, about seven kilos beyond Mons on the road to Charleroi. "A" subsection was billeted in a two-family brick house on the outer edge of the town in the direction of Germany. The crossroads at this spot was where the leading patrols of the German and British armies met in 1914. The civilian occupants of the house were a middle-aged couple, who looked more German than anything else, and often acted very much as though they were German. This red brick two-family house was not very large, and though I never investigated, I do not think it had either a second story or cellar. The floors were red tile, the walls were barren, and the ceilings dirty. The crew was divided into three parts, each finding a section of the floor in the two larger rooms for blankets, kits, and sleep. Cameron and I commandeered a small room apiece for ourselves. Where the two civilians slept is more than I can remember. Each of the larger rooms boasted of an open-grate stove of ancient manufacture. Water was out in the well in the yard, and none too clean. The rest of the battery was spread over the town in this same vicinity, with the cookhouse and quartermaster housed in an old factory. Baths were to be had in the little mining town of Havre, some six kilos away, and to them we went about twice a week. The town was a duster of dirty brick, wood, and plaster buildings, intersected by mud or slimy cobbled streets, with neither a decent building nor a pretty face to relieve the strain. The civilians were more than "fed up" on war and occupation, and though they tried at times to be hospitable, their efforts lacked both strength and conviction. Certain actions at times, from a few of them, indicated a sorrow at the Hun's departure. Even the wines and beers in the several miniature *estaminets* lacked all punch.

About the only thing of interest in or near the place was a soldiers' cemetery not far from "A" sub's quarters, built by the combined efforts of civilian and prisoner labor under German supervision in 1914 and 1915. On its main shaft was inscribed the legend, "DEUTSCHEN UND ENGLISCHEN SOLDATEN". Here slept many young men from over the Channel and over the Rhine. The German graves were marked by marble slabs, many of which had all but returned to dust from neglect. The British graves were large circles in which many occupied one grave, and around which had been planted evergreen trees, for the most part in flourishing condition in the winter of 1918. On one big grave the legend on the wooden monument read, "46 ENGLISH SOLDIERS of the ROYAL MIDDLESEX REGIMENT", mute testimony to the loyalty and sacrifice of England's "Contemptibles".


VILLE DE MONS

THÉATRE DE L'ALHAMBRA

« CINÉMA »

Mons, 13, Grand'Place, 13, Mons

REPRÉSENTATIONS

du Mardi 25 au Jeudi 27 Mars 1919

PROCHAINEMENT

L'Angelus de la Victoire

SIXIÈME PRINTEMPS

Les Marraines de France

Une Fine Mouche

GLOIRE ROUGE

Le Déserteur

PATRIE... D'ABORD

PROGRAMME

« PRIX : 20 CENTIMES »

Most of us spent a great deal of our time in Mons, where the buildings were more respectable, and where there were several good *estaminets* and cafes, one good cabaret, and a good movie house, the "Theatre De L'Alhambre". At this cinema house I saw an excellent picture, "Vendemiaire". Here too, was where the "3rd Brigade Concert Party" first performed, which produced much first-rate entertainment, enjoyed by troops and civilians alike, before starting on a tour that ended with them in Canada. Every soldier located a "home" somewhere in the vicinity, and some more than one. Also, inevitably, from the doorway at #8 Rue de "Somethingorother", as well as several other places, could almost always be seen a long line of waiting soldiers, many of whom would be seen later, lined up for a different (though related) purpose involving physical inspections—"Nighttime Line-ups" leading to special treatment followed by a trip down to base hospital.

As the time drew near when leaves were to be granted there arose a wild search for money. A shady practice developed. Civilians were found to be in possession

of everything from an army toothbrush to a motor lorry, claiming that they had purchased all in good faith from soldiers and officers. Everywhere there suddenly developed a shortage of blankets, clothing, and articles of equipment. A kit inspection would have met with failure! Cameron and I collected some cash by way of a few "sales", but chiefly thru poker and "the old board" (Crown and Anchor). Dice rattled and rolled continuously. It was then that I more than missed the best "go-getter" in the army—Bosdet, who could always be relied upon to produce needed cash. On the other hand, life in St. Symphorien took on a new aspect, for at least, we had Paris and Bruxelles to talk about.

On Christmas night I was on guard duty at the gun park, thus missing the Christmas dinner with the boys. One old reliable, Cameron, came out and relieved me so that I could get in "on the finish". To the eternal honor of QMS Bailey, and the chefs, Young and Sharpe, I want it known that our Christmas dinner of 1918 was a rare success.

X'MAS SUPPER 1918

* * * * * Soup * * * * * *
Turkey * * * * * * * * * * * * *
* * * * * * Roast Pork * * * * *
* * * * * * * * * * * Roast Beef
Creamed Potatoes & Gravies * * *
* Carrots Cabbage Turnip Beets
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
Dressing Catsup Pickles
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
Plum Pudding & Cream Sauce
* * * * * * Mince Pie * * * * * *
* * * Apples * * * * * * Oranges * * *
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
Beer * * * * * * Ale * * * * * * * Rum
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
* * * * * * Cigars * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
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* * * * Concerts * * * *
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[In a history of the Canadian army in the First World War, Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914—1919*, the official version of Christmas, 1918 reads: "The Canadians' occupation role in Germany lasted well into the New Year. A timely snowfall on the night of 24 December enabled all units to celebrate the white Christmas to which so many were accustomed at home. The traditional turkey and accompanying luxuries might be missing (they arrived later), but resourceful messing officers ably backed by expert battalion cooks saw to it that all enjoyed a Christmas dinner worthy of the name." In yet another letter home, Gnr. Cate commemorated the occasion as follows: CCC]*

Reg #536636 C.G.A.
B.E.F. France
X'mas Day

Dearest Grandma:

The Christmas that we all expected to be so unlike X'mas has so far proved out to be somewhat like X'mas after all. The first snow of the year in this part of Belgium fell during the night—and this morning dawned unusually bright and snappy, with patches of snow here and there over the houses and fields. And even now at mid-afternoon there is some snow left. After breakfast my section met in one of the billets and received cigars, tobacco and candy from our section commander, and his wife in Canada. Of course there are no parades today—and in spite of any reason there may be for our <u>not</u> enjoying X'mas as usual—that reason is being brushed aside for the spirit of Christmas has invaded the place in a most earnest way. A mate and I had made arrangements to spend the afternoon and evening with some civilian friends in Hornu—but as it happened my mate was hit for guard duty—as a result I have taken his place since it is quite important that he should keep his engagement whereas it makes little difference to me. This evening our battery will have its X'mas dinner in a very good hall in town—and it is to be some dinner too. Roast turkey and all the fixings, vegetables of all the necessary kinds, puddings, good things to drink—we shall be well off indeed. There won't be any pumpkin pie such as I used to get, and hope to get yet before very long at #16 Bell St.—but there are numerous substitutes. One of the best things of all is the fact that the War is over!—and that we know, in so far as it is possible—where our next X'mas is to be spent.

We are no longer quartered at Boussu, but have changed for billets which are more quiet and which are not uncomfortable. Our particular hostess is very kind—forever trying to make us more comfortable. Much of our washing she does for the sake of the help it is to us. Last night she cooked some ruffles—in other words

queer looking things tasting much like our own griddle cakes—those with syrup which we made ourselves went very well indeed. On the whole we are quite well off.

My turn for the beat comes in about five minutes so will finish up with love for you and Aunt Mary, and regards for the Shoreys and others who may ask for me. We may well feel thankful that there is such a short while between now and the time when I shall give you my love in person.

Write soon. Clifton

[...and in his memoirs, Gnr Cate recalls yet another, more poignant recollection of that Christmas. CCC]

On the 24th Jean had trudged all the way from Boussu to Mons to find me, for I had promised to be with his family for Christmas. All thru the afternoon and evening he had hunted about the little city for me or for someone who knew me, all in vain. Back to his home he went early Christmas morning—perhaps I would not forget—but when the family and the relatives had gathered at the table to honor an ordinary buck gunner of the line, I did not show up. Guard duty held me fast, and there was no way of notifying my friends. With them at the New Year supper, I had to do a lot of explaining before some of them believed that I had not found a better home. Jean and Olga trusted, Georgia was willing to, and the others managed to forgive as best they could. To me it was evident that all had dug deep into the meager supply of cash to prepare the "great" Christmas celebration to which I had failed to come.

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The last half of 1918 had spelled "absolute failure" to German militarism. The German navy had never been able to crawl out from under the rust of inaction. The U-Boat policy had been a bitter disappointment. Ludendorff's "great fifth offensive" of July, in which 650,000 troops were to advance once and for all time thru the Allied lines, never really got under way before the wise Foch had labeled it "FAILURE". The Belgians, supposedly "done", had broken thru from the Yser. The British and the Colonials had raised havoc on Flanders and Picardy. The French had left the once Hun-possessed Aisne and Champagne far behind in their advances. The Americans had not only won the Meuse Valley, but had gone on. The whole had ended with the German army in danger of annihilation. Allenby, with his British, Sepoy, Arab, and French forces had overcome the Turk in the

Holy Lands. Bulgaria had also collapsed. The Italians had defeated the Austrians. "Lying placards" had failed to stem the tide of resentment of the German people at home that was directed toward the war and its makers. The wretched Kaiser had fled to Holland to escape the "mob". The "War Lords" were in hiding, desperately penning frenzied "excuses", "explanations", and "denials". The final attempt at a peaceful settlement, without having to pay for crimes committed, had failed. A still great nation, groaned in agony as it struggled to free itself from unbreakable shackles bound about itself, by itself. The field fighting was done—but the recovery bid fair to be more painful than the worst pessimist could imagine.... So much for Fritz. His self invited punishment could not repay the rest of the world, particularly Belgium and France, for damage suffered because of the "Kaiser's War".

Three months of the New Year, 1919, were spent on the Continent. During that time, the war was all but forgotten, and the troops made the most of the many privileges granted to them. Several leaves to Bruxelles, one of which included visits to Louvaine and Antwerp, a long sanctioned (and a hurried, unofficial second) leave to Paris, a trip (unauthorized) to the German Rhine, and many short passes to districts within the Mons sector, were my lucky allotment. Something of these trips follows.

(Note on spelling: BRUSSELS-English; BRUSSEL-Belgian; BRUXELLES-French. CJC*)*

Brussels is often called "Little Paris", and the name is well deserved. Just as the Frenchman glories in his beloved "Gai Paree", does the Belgian admit no peer to his wondrous Brussels. On January 6th I received the first of several leaves to this truly great city, and within a few hours was with the "leave party" on board a lorry bouncing over the "King's Highway" to the capitol city. The lorry was overcrowded, and the evil smelling exhaust was blown into our faces along with the dirt of the road, but no happier sounding lot of boys ever trod on one another's feet.

From a point of vantage on the tailboard, I could get an occasional breath of fresh air, and could also keep the less lucky members of the party posted as to our progress. The distance from Mons to Brussels is about thirty-five miles. At every town thru which we passed—Soigines, Hal, Uccle, and others—I checked the mileage and reported. At St. Gilles I shouted, "Here we are, boys!" but found that there were yet many minutes of riding to come before we reached our destination. There were frequent cries of, "What do ya say! How much more we gotta go? Can'tcha get a little life out o' this old tub?" At last, with our patience sorely tried, the lorry came to a halt. "Here ye are, Canadians! All out!", shouted the driver, as we tumbled into the busy "Marche de la Grande Place", often in other days the

scene of many hard fought battles and "friendly" jousts of old nobility. Surrounding the Place are many famous old buildings, among them the Hotel de Ville (1410) with its tower (1454) reaching up 360 feet above us, and opposite, the Maison du Roi (1443-1877) standing where several of its predecessors were destroyed by fires of peace and war, and the Maisons des Corporations, with its many figures far above the street dedicated to the various establishments of commerce. The atmosphere of these quaint buildings was charged with romance, strengthened by the many vendors as they scurried around advertising their wares, which included a little of everything from cabbages to lace. Leaving the square thru a narrow lane, we came upon a fine statue erected in honor of the brave English nurse, Edith Cavell, shot down by a German firing squad October 12, 1915. Miss Cavell, a professional nurse when the Hun took Brussels, had remained to nurse impartially all nationalities, including German. Arrested by Fritz, she confessed to having assisted certain Allied soldiers to escape thru the German lines, was secretly tried, condemned, and executed, in spite of the efforts of the American legation to bring her case before the highest German authorities. Certainly her record of fair service to all demanded finer consideration.

Nearby was the office of the Canadian Paymaster. To him we went, before looking up the mansion at #84 Avenue Brugman, which had been turned over to Canadians on leave. Here we found a private dwelling full of interest, most particularly the beautiful ballroom. From there, we went to the Canadian "Y" in a former German department store on Rue Neuve at the corner of Rue du Pont Neuf, where the leave party was disbanded and turned loose to "see" Brussels according to each man's idea of "seeing". Much of my time was spent in company with Cameron, although occasionally we became separated for various reasons, and carried on alone or with others.

Another interesting place on Rue du Pont Neuf was the brilliant Cabaret Madrid. Here was night life enough for any trooper, with all of its glamour and alluring "entertainers". There was good music and fine dancing exhibitions, all of which could be watched or participated in, provided you kept some purchase before you on the table. If the purchase happened to be liquid, as it was expected to be, it had better be left on the table if one desired to "watch" very long, for the Madrid's liquors were potent. Cash was the big word, and woe unto the gallant of the lower ranks if some bewhiskered, rheumatic old officer at another table advertised more freely, his pile of francs, to the younger gallant's companion of the night. The rule worked both ways as well, but the reverse order seldom made an appearance. On the one exception I noted, two of the younger, and therefore truly pretty girls left their two officers several tables away, and came to the table at which Cameron and I were seated. For some time we carried on famously, but after Cam and I had

purchased and consumed much of everything in the place that was drinkable, the girls were still sober, whereas two noble 12th gunners were about to go "under the table". When the two companions suggested that it was time we left, Cameron collared me and we did leave followed by our two companions. Just how and perhaps "why" the ever faithful "Cam" disconnected us from those two dangerous though attractive ma'mselles is more than I can remember. I awoke later in an armchair in the "Y", with a "head" that was never my own! Cameron sat on the floor about five feet away grunting and massaging his head, and he too insisted that the head he so carefully stroked was not his own. (But this is not "The Confessions of two Canadian Artillerymen").

A day of sightseeing at a speed that was dazzling followed. Over the broad boulevards, thru narrow, winding alleys and lanes, into parks—and out, then to enter splendid buildings that were surely examples of architectural and constructional expertise seldom surpassed. Going from the most modern, to the dusty and musty ancient, by a simple "turning of a corner". The Palais de Justice, at the end of Rue Royale, one of the finest "piles of stone" in the city, overlooking a variety of roofs of houses so old that the oldest inhabitant has forgotten the stories he heard as a child about their original owners—La Bibliotheque, with miles of printed volumes and priceless manuscripts, and its statues and paintings—La Bourse, in the business section—La Poste Centrale, which, after all, did not seem so different from our own old Central Post Office in Boston—l'Eglise Ste. Gudule, its massive towers looking out over the quaint old roofs and the more modern structures (a sort of giant guardian of them all, which in truth it is), and inside, the wondrous sculptured figures and woodcarvings, the paintings, the marvelous stained glass windows, and the pulpit. There were also La Chaire de Verite, which held me entranced as I studied the story carved upon it of Adam and being driven out of the garden of Eden—and then the squares, Place Rogier, and many others—the monuments which fill nearly every available space throughout the city. Colonne du Congress in Place des Martyrs (the latter, which is dedicated to the Belgians killed in battle with the Dutch in 1830), the former, a monument to the founders of the realm, that reaches skyward for one hundred-fifty feet, crowned at the top with a Belgian hero-statue of old, and displaying on each of the corners that form its base, figures representing the essential liberties: Worship, Press, Association, and Education—Anspach Monument—the Statue des Comtes d'Egmont et de Hornes—all to be "seen" in just a few days. Such a whirl of interest! L'Eglise St. Gudule, and its Verbruggen masterpiece, that was built in 1220—L'Eglise Notre Dame des Victories, built to commemorate the battle of Woeringen in 1304—La Chapelle, dating back to 1210. Then there was the Ecole Militaire, and the Palais du Roi, in use at the time as a hospital. Duquesnoy's famous child-fountain, loaded

down with countless legends, was a source of much amusement and some speculation by the troops. Cameron and I toured together the Porte de Hal, and the last of the Palais des Netherlands, which was destroyed by fire in 1731 and was now a part of the new palace grounds—and Waterloo, where the British finally brought Napoleon to terms. All this, and much more that I have forgotten, was crowded into the all too few days I had in Brussels. I could have enjoyed three months without tiring of that city where dwells the brave King Albert and his loyal Queen Elizabeth. What a continuous round of pleasures and interests—to be followed by an evening at the Theatre de la Gaite—followed in turn by the cabarets. Sleep!?! What time for that?

Cam and I made a hurried run to Louvain, once the capitol of Belgium (14th Century), and visited the University and its noted library, the ruins of an ancient castle, the famous church of St. Pierre (15th Century), and the Hotel de Ville (1448-63), with towers and statues that rivaled in beauty the Hotel de Ville in Brussels. Here by a little stream once camped Julius Caesar with his conquering army.

Accompanied by Williams of the Light Field Artillery, I visited Antwerp on the river Scheldt. On this day the weather was "not so good", but we splashed around the cathedral over 600 years old, went to L'Eglise St. James, and into the museum, and the art gallery. This city boasts of miles of docks, and is one of the greatest commercial centers of Europe, and yet it "keeps clean". If I had had the time, a grandmotherly old lady said she would show me how to make lace, but I compromised and made a small purchase instead. In a warm and dry cafe Williams and I wasted too much time with two pleasant companions, with the result that our visit had to be cut suddenly short for a race to the train. Then back I journeyed to the city of Brooksele that was once a mere crossover for the Senne. Here in spite of my scurrying about, I enjoyed the hospitality of the widow of a Belgian officer, met on my first day in the city, for my last six hours in Brussels. Our talk was not of the war, but of Belgium and America, and the greatness of both, in art and in commerce. The 10th of January found me bidding good-bye to a city, whose charm I can never forget.

Back in St. Symphorien I did not feel the same oppressiveness I had known before—there was something to talk about. A friendly family living a few kilos up the road from our billets made our visits pleasant. The long walk under the stars, coming back after a well spent evening helped to keep us in condition. (The "us" being Cameron and myself) Then also, there were the parades for casual inspection, and for the volunteering for duty with the Army of Occupation and the upcoming Siberian Expedition. Not many of the 12th cared to extend their term of service beyond the "duration of war and six months after" period.

On February 4th, returning from a short stay with my friends, Jean and his family at Boussu-bois, I learned that my Paris leave had "come thru". Over a month before I had entered my request for this leave in the approved army fashion.

Once more Cameron was to be with me on a great trip. Together we hurried thru the necessary rites of preparation. At the battery office we went for our orders and drew desired clothing from the quartermaster. The medical officer passed us as physically fit to withstand the rigors of the "Battle of Paris", and though the paymaster shook his head when he looked into our pay books he did some needed "doctoring" (for unless we could show a certain balance we could not go). Then the baths at Havre, a quick "pick up and pack up", and we were ready to go. After a rushed lunch a lorry carried us to Mons, leaving us at the railroad station about five o'clock in the afternoon. Then the usual wait for a train long overdue. From somewhere in the recesses of my memory come the following lines, having to do with Mons—composed evidently, as the Hun drove us out in 1914, and dedicated to the day when we should return:

But where the wave hath ebbed—
the flood shall roar.
And we await the tides' returning feet.

I wonder if there IS a "beyond"? I wonder IF those boys whose bodies rested in the soil about Mons could feel the rumble of the "tides returning feet"? I wonder....

We were in the station at Mons, waiting for the train that would carry us further along on our journey to "Gai Paree". All about were others also waiting. Mostly soldiers, there were a few civilians, who watched us in uniform as we performed foolish antics and "killed" time in various ways—watched us, with puzzled expressions on their faces. I saw one 14 year old girl that I had seen before in one of the 12th's billets in St. Symphorien early in December. I saw also that she was very soon to become a mother. She was not, at first, glad to see me and be recognized, but after a few moments she grew friendly, and we talked for an hour or more. She did not intend to commit suicide—that "was a sin" she told me, but she prayed that she might die when the baby came. I tried to make her see my way, to live and take care of the child, and then I found that the baby was to be a FRITZ. After telling me that, she buried her face in her hands, and her sobbing was not pleasant to hear. In a little while she looked up—a "dead tired" child herself—and seemed surprised that I still sat on the packing case beside her. Could I still talk to her after

that? Did I not hate her for admitting that she had "liked" a certain Fritz? And, we talked on... perhaps, she saw my way after all.

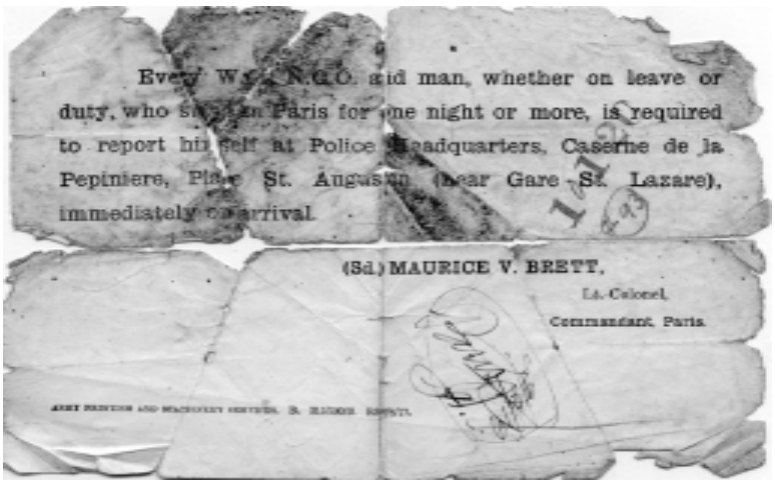
Some of the others waiting in the station that afternoon were: a 1st Brigade man whom I had met in hospital, bound for Chateau Roi and his own wedding, a rheumatic sergeant bound for Canada, a 9th C.F.A. man some 31 days A.W.O.L., hunting for his unit, and a sous-officer of Belgium's army, also Paris bound. At 8:15 there was a great stirring about and much shuttling as the train wheezed in. Cameron, the Belgian, and I crowded into a shabby remnant of a once first class compartment car. The floor boarding was loose and worn, the ceiling was so battered that had the night been clear we could have seen the stars. Instead, we saw—and felt—the rain as it oozed thru. All the glass in the doors and windows was gone, and newspapers in many languages made poor work of checking the raw draft. The train buckled, jolted, rattled, screeched, and wasted many minutes with seemingly unnecessary halts, and yet somehow, it eventually got us into Amiens (whether on the next day, or on the second day, I do not know). At any rate, it was about nine o'clock in the morning when red-capped MPs ordered us out of the station until 2:15 PM.

The Amiens-Paris express was a rare treat after the other modes of transportation to which we had never become accustomed: mules, gun carriages, box- and flatcars, ancient compartment-passenger coaches, and lorries. Amiens is seventy miles from the metropolis. As the train sped over the rails, I watched flashing glimpses of little villages pass by, some neat and some not so neat, isolated farm houses, fields waiting for the spring sun, pretty groves, long straight double rows of trees which marked a highway between their trunks, and many suggestions of the earlier bombardments. But one cannot "see" a country from the windows of a speeding train, so I turned my attention to the other occupants of the compartment. There were six of us. Cameron, the Belgian officer met in Mons, and myself, you can easily picture. Opposite me squatted an oversized elderly Frenchman whose face was behind heavy spectacles and an "ol' Bill" mustache. His cap and a heavy bag rested under the firm grip of fat fists in his lap, and his monstrous cane seemed ever ready to slide in my direction—an incident which I hoped in vain would occur. Beside him sat a vest-pocket edition Charlie Chaplin in French. These two were doing their utmost to outtalk each other with rapid fire French that was beyond my ken. As referee I should have given the decision to the little fellow, although the big man's inability to assist his talk with hands and arms undoubtedly was a tremendous handicap. The sixth passenger was a woman—tall, slender, and probably forty-five years of age. She carried no luggage other than a tiny silk bag. Every time I looked in her direction, I found her staring at me with weary eyes. Her face was very drawn and wrinkled, and her brow was marked by a deep frown

which indicated a puzzled, even dazed, mental condition. Her perpetual gaze disturbed me greatly as the time passed, so I tried to melt the frown with the most pleasant smile I could muster. It failed. For a few moments she transferred her attention to Cameron, but it was soon back to me. What thoughts lay behind those searching eyes will forever haunt me From time to time my two soldier companions and I would talk a little, but their attention was focused for most of the trip on a newspaper divided between them. The train slipped into a more thickly settled section. There were spires, tall buildings, and then—the Gare du Nord in Paris.

Paris! The Mecca of all "leave hounds". At first sight a confusing, dazzling, and yet pleasing swirl of activity. No war ever touches Paris for very long—that is—on the OUTSIDE. It was about four o'dock in the afternoon when the sous-officer led Cameron and me thru the busy section before the Gare du Nord to a cafe in the vicinity, where we enjoyed a light lunch and champagne. This, by the way, at one of the many tables under a canvas awning out on what in America would be the sidewalk. Incidentally, it is a pleasant and neighborly custom, even in February. As we talked, I watched the people passing by—young folks—old folks—children—uniformed men and women of many nations—well dressed—poorly dressed—all intent on going somewhere about something. One can "grasp" Brussels, but Paris...!

Our Belgian friend left us at the cafe, and Cameron and I hunted around until we came upon the British Army and Navy League Club in Place de la Republic. Here we gathered needed information and enjoyed a "clean up". The evening was spent at a nearby cinema, after which we slept at the Hotel du Bon Giene. In the morning we located the Canadian "Y" headquarters at the Hotel D'Iena, on the


Every W[illegible] N.C.O. and man, whether on leave or
duty, who sl[illegible] in Paris for one night or more, is required
to report hi[illegible]self at Police Headquarters, Caserne de la
Pepiniere, Place St. Augustin (near Gare St. Lazare),
immediately on arrival.

(Sd.) MAURICE V. BRETT,
Lt.-Colonel,
Commandant, Paris.

avenue by the same name, and made arrangements for a room and breakfast at five francs per. This fine hotel became our headquarters for the rest of our stay in the city. Leaving Cameron at the hotel I walked to the Arc de Triomphe, the hub or terminal for many fine boulevards. From this vicinity I rode in the tram to the Caserne de la Pepiniere, in response to the order issued to every man on leave to Paris. Here I received the customary advice regarding conduct, physical and otherwise. The order had been: "Every W.O., N.C.O., and man, whether on leave or duty, who stays in Paris for one night or more, is required to report himself at Police Headquarters, Caserne de la Pepiniere, Place St. Augustin (near Gare St. Lazare), immediately on arrival. (Sd.) MAURICE V. BRETT, Lt.-Col., Commandant, Paris." With this formality attended to, I was free to see the sights of Paris.

At the old caserne I met Corporal Bleasdale of the 42nd Canadian Scots (Black Watch), who told me such interesting stories of the place that I accompanied him on a preliminary survey of the city. Our ramblings led us into the Tuilleries, where I saw folks "holding down" benches, just as they do on Boston Common, and other parks—the Luxembourg, where rest the bodies of Hugo, Voltaire, Mirabeau, and others—to a part of the old wall—the Place de la Concorde, where the executions of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette took place—and the Place de la Bastille, with its memories of a dread prison—then, over several bridges crossing and recrossing the Seine. From these bridges, as from a choice theater seat could be watched, with ever increasing interest and admiration, the "Capitol of Europe" in action as a most wondrous play is watched. My friend guided me also to the Palais de Justice, the Pantheon, the Bibliotheque Nationale, L'Ecole Militaire overlooking Champ de Mars, and lastly, when dusk was gathering, to the Place de l'Opera, the square before one of the great opera houses of Europe, where we were met by two girls. To one of these girls, Helene, the corporal was to be married. The other, Sussette, or "Suzy" as her chum called her, became my companion for much of the remainder of my stay in Paris. The evening was divided between a movie at the Omnia on Boulevard Montmartre and a cabaret which made the Madrid at Brussels look like a "pocket edition". Shortly before daybreak I returned to the D'Iena to find Cameron still awake and ready to agree that Paris was a "home", and that we needed to restock our pockets with the paper francs so necessary to proper enjoyment of our leave. Four hours later the chambermaid routed us out of our slumbers. We breakfasted and hurried to the paymaster, who deliberately (I cannot believe accidentally) overpaid our paybook balance. To the English and Colonial "Ys", the American Red Cross, and a French LOC canteen, I owe a deep gratitude, for it was their low-priced meals that permitted us to conserve on funds when Cameron and I happened to eat alone. The American "Y" was the poorest joke in France, insofar as it was of any help to us, in Paris, or anywhere else. Yes,

you could find shelter for the night—if you had the price—and if you would come back later when the German-accented secretary had decided that there would be no more Americans coming in. You could also purchase sweets and smokes—at a price. You seemed to sense the "for Americans only" in the secretary's, "What's the matter with your own "Y"?" And yet, a glance in any of our "Ys" at any time, would make you wonder if the Americans even had a "Y". I mentioned the fact to several doughboy friends, and got, "Aw, our "Y" is just a joke! And a damn poor one at that!" Perhaps I happened to hit just one particular trend of thought. I hope so, for I knew then that in MY home town in America, the folks were "digging deep" to keep up the "good work of the Y".

I cannot, in detail, describe the days that followed. They were filled with events, but I took little time for the retrospection that might have resulted in accurate notes of interest. In the pleasures of the moment I forgot the "years to come" when such notes would have been a source of great pleasure. Cameron and I traveled together much of the time but also enjoyed rambling about the various sections of the city by ourselves, selecting temporary companions here and there from among civilians. The uniform was my passport giving admission to cafes of dangerous repute, and to refined homes, alike. Wherever I went I found an atmosphere of welcome, which led me to believe that the French considered a Canadian something of a relative, regardless of Britain's grip on the country. There was seldom any talk of the war. The conversation very easily drifted into channels pregnant with the interests of the speakers' personal lives, as is the way all over the world. The message wanted from me was nearly always the same—whether it be on the street, in the cafe, or in the home. "Tell us something of America, and of Canada. Are those United States as wonderful as they are pictured?" How did this thing, and that, in France, compare with things of like nature in my country? Never did I intentionally give the impression to those who almost believed it true, that here in America, money is free. Often I discovered that my descriptions did not agree with those of some of the Americans they had met. The intelligent Frenchman readily sorted the false from the true, but there were many who pictured America as a land of free money, gained without effort, and thought that practically everyone in the country was a millionaire. There were very many who looked forward to coming to the States to live. At first I tried to show them that although my country could offer them many opportunities, they would find the going rough for a long time to come. Eventually I learned that my best move was silence, for those who intended to come were sure of themselves on that score. I was not at all flattered at remarks made to me about Yankees, and though I never denied that I was one, it was seldom that I volunteered the information until I had

met the person more than once. Often amusing incidents were the result of my "confession".

One week after our arrival in Paris, Cameron and I spent a day at Versailles, a twelve mile ride from the city. Leaving the station we walked along the broad Avenue St. Cloud to its end and the Place d'Armes, thru the great iron gate and across the first court to the Cour de Marbre. Here, surrounded by three walls of the Chateau, we sensed a little of the spirit of the place, and imagined, according to our individual memories of French history, that we were living in the days of Marie Antoinette and the last Louis. For a long time we roamed thru the famous halls and galleries, salons and chambers, within the Chateau. In the Chapel we met Jeanne, who suggested a walk thru the park. The lakes were covered with ice, the many fountains dry, the gardens and groves were in winter garb, but they were there, and imagination filled in the gaps. Jeanne led us thru the two Trianons and on to the lake farthest from the Chateau. Here there was skating and sliding. From a little fellow we hired two pairs of miserably dull skates, after Jeanne left us, and proceeded to enjoy a little exercise. Cameron, an excellent skater, attracted the admiring attention of many on the ice. As I was tightening the strap which had become loose on one skate a voice said, "Pardon, m'sieur. But will you please teach me to skate?" The speaker was dressed in a costume of pink, with cheeks to match, and was undeniably pretty. She was not expecting the answer I made, and showed it when I said, "Certainly. But really, my chum is a much better teacher than I am—I'll call him."

Cameron came quickly and accepted the post of instructor with pleasure. After a few moments of fooling, the "girl in pink" demonstrated the fact that her knowledge of skating was well advanced. She and Cameron were well matched and made a pretty fine picture as they flashed over the ice, arm in arm. There had been a reason for my thoughtfulness toward my mate, and that reason was Jeanne, who soon returned to the lake. We joined Cameron and his companion to enjoy ourselves until sundown. That the "girl in pink" would accept Cam's invitation to spend the evening together I did not doubt, but when we left the ice, she bade us all a friendly "au revoir" and, entering a motor-car on the boulevard was driven away.

On the 14th Cameron and I visited the Chateau de la Malmaison, and paid a franc to see the "Exposition Napoleonienne de 1918, au benefice Des Oeuvres de Guerre". The name was impressive—the exhibition more so. For all the years that had come and gone since Napoleon and Josephine had enjoyed their pleasures and suffered their disappointments, the touch of both was there at Malmaison. In the Salon La Bibliotheque, the Salle du Conseil, Le Salon de Musique, Josephine's Chamber, and all about the inside and the outside of this famous old establish-

ment, were the unmistakable influences of the Imperial Family. It was easy to picture the little great man, in counsel with his generals at the council table. What scenes of heart breaking sorrows suffered by the loyal Josephine, had those mirrors witnessed, as they peeked out from behind their red plush draperies, in her private chamber. How much had those two great people planned together in their music room, with its rich gold and black trimmings. France has long been a republic, but the little corporal is still remembered. Out in the coach house we found the family's one time coach-of-state, still in excellent condition.

Two Sundays, with their services at St. Madelene's Church, were gone,—had passed since Cameron and I had come to Paris. Our leave had expired before we realized it, in the whirl of interests. Cameron was ever a better soldier than Cate. He "obeyed" orders. "Rules and regulations, were made for a purpose", he said, as I bid him a fond good-bye at the Gare St. Lazare. "I am going back to the battery but a few days late, and as usual, will try to pacify the SM when he learns that again you are overstaying your leave." For ten more days I remained in Paris and vicinity, enjoying every moment. What were a few Rules and Regulations to me. I was not a soldier. I was just a civilian, over there to fight when there was fighting to be done. Now the war was over. Probably I should never see Europe again. Therefore, why not make the most of an opportunity that was mine? So I reasoned with my conscience—and I do not regret it.

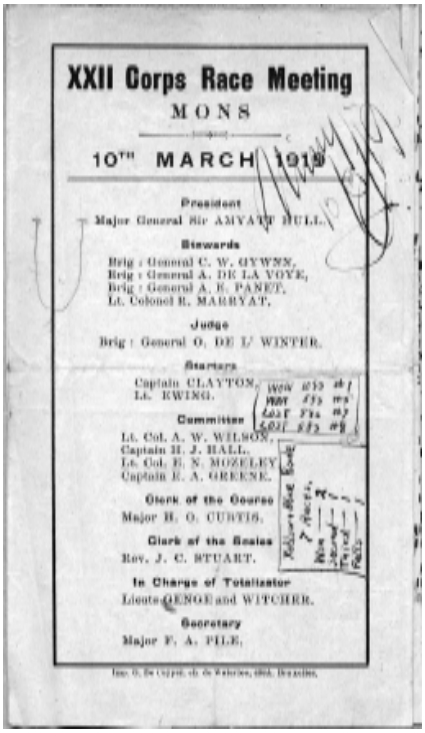
The day of parting came. It was easy to say good-bye to Bleasdale, Helene, and the many friends I had made, because a trip to Germany was yet to come. But, I learned with surprise that leaving "ma petite camarade de Paris"—Sussette, was not as easy as expected. She could not accompany me to the station, which was probably well, for there I had to think fast and move faster to duck two red-caps. In her home the night before we had said all the necessary things that were to be said, so that when I saw her for a moment just before leaving, a simple, "Bon Voyage", was all that was needed. The usual light heart was missing as I settled down into the upholstery of a compartment, on board the train bound "up the line".

At the battery the wise old Sergeant-Major's long, steady, calculating gaze, was my only chastisement. The unspoken rebuke, but it was sufficient. Cameron said simply, "Gunner's luck, Old Pal!' At St. Symphorien I found the Khaki College of Canada in full swing. There was another name in use among some of the officers—"Universitaire de St. Symphorien", and yet another one in use by certain of the troops. Most of us found it a help in "ducking" fatigues about town, and a very few even gained something of value from a little diligent study.

On March 10th, at Nimy, a little distance out of Mons, the 22nd Corps held a horse racing meet. The weather for the day consisted of rain, and more rain, but

the races went on, and were well attended. A few of the affairs were interesting; one or two were exciting. Betting was heavy among those who had money but I was still carrying a "dead" paybook. The most notable riding of the day was done by a jockey wearing yellow and blue colors, who finished six out of eight starts, well in the money.

[From the "Official History" comes this terse assessment: "In Belgium, as in Germany, despite the natural impatience of officers and men to return to their homeland, the time passed quickly, as all were kept busy. Units continued a programme of training, principally to maintain physical fitness; there were educational classes for those who needed them; there was more opportunity for recreation, and all ranks took part in various forms of sport." CCC]



XXII Corps Race Meeting

MONS

10TH MARCH 1919

President
Major General Sir AMYATT HULL.

Stewards
Brig : General C. W. GWYNN,
Brig : General A. DE LA VOYE,
Brig : General A. E. PANET,
Lt. Colonel R. MARRIAT.

Judge
Brig : General O. DE L' WINTER.

Starters
Captain CLAYTON,
Lt. EWING.

Committee
Lt. Col. A. W. WILSON,
Captain H. J. HALL.
Lt. Col. E. N. MOZELEY
Captain E. A. GREENE.

Clerk of the Course
Major B. O. CURTIS.

Clerk of the Scales
Rev. J. C. STUART.

In Charge of Totalisator
Lieuts GENGE and WITCHER.

Secretary
Major F. A. PILE.

March was not half over when I learned that the 12th would remain in St. Symphorien until April—at least. The monotony of the sleepy little village was making the boys irritable, and trips to homes in surrounding towns, failed to give relief. There was but one thing for me to do, and that, was to go away for a few days. My objective was, of course, the Rhine, but from the few mates to whom I mentioned my plans, I learned that leaves to Germany were not being granted.... What to do?

With a forty-eight hour pass to Boussu in my pocket, I climbed into a lorry late one night, headed for the border. Thru Charleroi, Namur, and Liege I rode, and then when about ninety miles from St. Symphorien, I found myself on foot. On to Aachen I hiked, arriving soaked thru with rain and mud from cap to boots, and in trouble with two MPs. The splendid efforts of several French soldiers extricated me from that difficulty. I went on. A dirty well-worn French greatcoat covering the Khaki, and a shabby French trench cap where the Canadian cap should have been, helped. Twelve hours were needed to cover the forty miles between Aachen and Cologne. As I approached the ancient German city, the buildings, towers, Rhine, etc., formed a picturesque setting, softened by a fine mist. Once inside the

city limits I was disappointed, for the narrow, dirty streets, and the dull old houses, were not what I had expected to find. The meeting with a 4th Division Canadian Infantryman resulted in a somewhat renewed interest. Together we visited several places of interest, chief of which was the old cathedral built sometime in the 13th century. My new acquaintance's chief delight, however, was beer—when he could not get brandy—so my time was well filled with "both". The civilians I discovered were actually more friendly than many of the dwellers of St. Symphorien. This was a help. Perhaps rules against "mixing" would have helped in St. Symphorien too.

On the following day, the man from the 4th and I visited Bonn, a place more to my liking than Cologne. Here more rules were broken, for my friend was well acquainted with a German family who made us welcome. Bonn proved to be a University town, and boasted (before the war) that the Kaiser had once been a student there. There were several interesting churches, among them the Muenster and Krensberg, which we thoroughly "inspected". The banks of the Rhine are dotted with many comfortable homes, and in summertime must present a pretty picture. It was then March—rainy and dreary. A cold, developing overnight, grew worse thru the morning. I started back toward Belgium, and before long was suffering from a well developed case of grippe. From Cologne to Mons is about 140 miles, and at the time I made the trip, everything was rain-soaked and muddy. Considering my physical and mental condition as I slowly covered the distance by foot, wagon, lorry, and train, I have since wondered many times how I ever reached my battery. For once, St. Symphorien looked good to me. Only the perfect care of an understanding Cameron, bought my temperature back to normal, thus keeping me out of hospital. I had seen the Rhine—but it was worth no more than the price.

On March 29th came a long looked for order. After a last "good bye and good luck" to many good friends in the vicinity, the 3rd Brigade entrained at Mons for Le Havre. This was our last, long, weary ride in the famous "40 HOMMES OU 8 CHEVAUX" boxcars. As we rolled slowly "DOWN the line", we passed many familiar places, and saw the civilians and soldiers making great strides in repairing the damage wrought by many battles. At night we kept warm with braziers, and when the gas and smoke grew too thick, we climbed to the roofs of the cars for fresh air. The last day of March found us back in Le Havre where the 12th had landed a year ago. (Throughout the description of this last ride down the line I have said "we" and "us", but now comes the confession of a last breaking of Rules and Regulations. I did not reach Le Havre with the battery, though I was there soon after. All letters from Sussette of Paris had carried a postscript which read, "Si vous passez Place de l'Opera a 7 heures moins 10 minutes, je passerai

sans faute, tous les soirs", and it was my great pleasure to test the quality of that promise by getting into Paris, "by hook or by crook", while the battery went on to Le Harve and made its first preparations for the departure from France. The memory of that last stolen trip to Paris has since made many discouraging hours much easier.) The 12th that went thru the various processes of preparing for departure was not the same 12th that had been in those tents a year before. There were many different faces, and all the familiar faces wore a different expression....

Finally, at 6 P.M. on April 2nd, we marched off from French soil, and on to a Channel transport. The ship soon slipped quietly out of the mouth of the Seine and headed for Southampton across the channel. France was behind us—and so were the trenches, days and nights of hell, comrades whose faint "good-byes" we really could not hear, St. Symphorien, a few real friends, Brussels, Paris, and—"ma petite camarade de Paris". Before us was a NEW world, but we did not realize it then. My whole being thrilled with the thought of "going home", and yet there was a little heaviness in my heart. Pal Cameron was beside me as we took a last look before hunting for a warm place to sleep.

"It wasn't such a bad old war, Cate," he said. "It gave us a few good 'homes'. Wouldn't you like to feel that you were coming back some time?"

"You're right, as usual, old-timer", I answered.

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No war memoirs would be considered complete without mention of the world-famous "cootie". This little pet was ever true to its master, never deserting except after death. I had 'em—the "Big 4" had 'em —the 12th had 'em —the Allies had 'em —the Hun had 'em —the "civies" had 'em —in fact, EVERYBODY had 'em. It was part of the game, and for many, the worst part. At the "delousing plant" (ugly term), we filed in one door with our clothes and personal kit. As we moved along in single file, our outfits were taken by attendants, checked and sent to be baked in steam and sulfur until free from every form of germ and "cootie". Then into a big cement chamber we marched, and when more attendants were ready (Oh! What evil grins their faces bore!) we were shut in—naked. For a few seconds nothing happened. We stood staring stupidly at one another, with perspiration oozing from every pore. Then, faintly at first, but gradually increasing to a roar, came the hissing of steam. Clouds of it filled the chamber. Then water—hot, and growing hotter! For a while the place was thick with soapsuds as the boys scrubbed. We had "got the idea". Then the atmosphere within that vault grew unbearable. There was coughing, choking, spitting, shrieking, cursing, and here and there a man collapsed. Then the water became warm... cool... cold... I C Y! Those atten-

dants were there to KILL COOTIES, and THAT THEY DID, regardless of other possibilities. After what seemed hours, a door opened, and we dashed out of that "hell's kitchen" and ran down a corridor to another room. Here we found seats, with numbers to correspond with those on the discs hung about our necks. Less evil attendants handed us towels, bathrobes, and smokes—and in one or two cases assisted in the rubdown. We sat down in our robes, to smoke and wait. Soon, hanging from overhead rails, came little wire cages in a long train, which stopped when the numbers upon them coincided with the numbers on our seats and discs. Here were our clothes. We made a dash for the cages, but sprang back dismayed when our fingers smelled of burning flesh. In time, even the tarnished buttons on our uniforms were cool, and we were out in the open once more. Fresh blankets were issued to us, and for the first time in many months, we were truly clean and we OUGHT to have been.

*(Note: I was somewhat amused one day while on a visit to the Libby Museum just out of Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, to find a "real" cootie from France, pinned to a card in a glass case. The legend said that the little fellow had arrived from the trenches in a letter in perfect health, although quite hungry-*CJC *)*

In the British Isles—"After" France

The transports docked at Southampton at about one o'clock of the morning of April third, but the troops were permitted to sleep until daybreak before going off. Just before the order came to leave the boat, I was awakened by a chorus of voices shouting the old song of the line from another part of the deck:

"I wanna go home! I wanna go home!
I don't wanna go to the trenches no more—
The bullets—they whistle, the cannon—they roar-r-r-r.
Take me over the sea—Where Heinie can't get at me—
Oh! My! I'm too young to die!
I———WANNA GO HOME!"

Long after sunrise, a troop train carried us out of the dock-shed, where for hours we had been deluged with hot coffee and cocoa, buns and Huntley and Palmer's "war-time" biscuits. We were getting something of a thrill from the sound of civilians speaking English, and from the warm friendliness of the busy girls serving out breakfasts. Although those whose work kept them near the railroad must have seen thousands of homeward bound troops come from the docks at

Southampton, there were very few who did not shout a welcome to us as we rolled by. After a run of several hours we were in Milford, Surrey, marching over the same roads to the same camp, which had been our first in England over fifteen months before. Several busy days were spent at Witley Camp forming new contacts. The evenings were filled with entertainments of varied nature at the different canteens and movie halls. For demobilization purposes the personnel of the batteries were reassigned. The 12th was designated as a western bound unit, and I went to the 4th, bound for St. John, New Brunswick.

(Note: I have failed to mention before that, while at St. Symphorien, a parade was held at Mons, where units were "cited", and individuals "decorated". Our Major, Colin McKay received a Military Cross, and good old Sgt. Troop, another Bar for his Military Medal. CJC*)*

On the 7th of April we moved to Kinmel Park camp in Rhyl (northern Wales). This shift to a camp near Conway, and that country in which I had found so much that was pleasant a year earlier was a real pleasure. At Kinmel we found quarters in wooden huts that were dry and easily kept clean, in spite of frequent rains. One fine afternoon as I sat on a bench outside my hut with several other mates I received a visitor who was more than welcome. Bosdet, the "Smiling Mex", stationed in another part of the great camp, had returned to his place in the "Big 4". Only Fisher was missing then.

Before I had become fully aware of the fact that a "Demobilization Leave" was to be granted, Cameron and I had left Kinmel and were rolling thru Conway on a swiftly and smoothly running train. In our possession were leaves to Ireland, dated on the 9th, and good until the 17th. At Holyhead we left the train and boarded the boat that was to take us across the Irish Sea to Dublin. Most of our fellow passengers were civilians, but we soon learned that there were several kinds of Irish civies. There were those from the north, those from the Dublin region, and those from the south. A substantially representative part from each section was aboard, and before the boat was fairly under way, we knew all the good and bad about each

district. There were many invitations to many parts of the "little bit o'heaven" but we were forced to "decline with many thanks", explaining that as our time was limited we would be unable to stop in any one place more than a few hours. Of course, we knew that each part of Ireland had its wonders, and that it would take many weeks to see them all. Therefore, to see the east coast in six days, we would have to move quickly.

[There follows descriptions of the "extended" leave in the British Isles, camp life in the Demobilization centers, day trips on which the surviving members of the "Big 4" further cemented their deep friendship, building unrest and impatience in the Camps at the slow pace of repatriation, shipping orders (just in the nick of time), and high jinks Westward-bound on board the Mauritania. CCC]

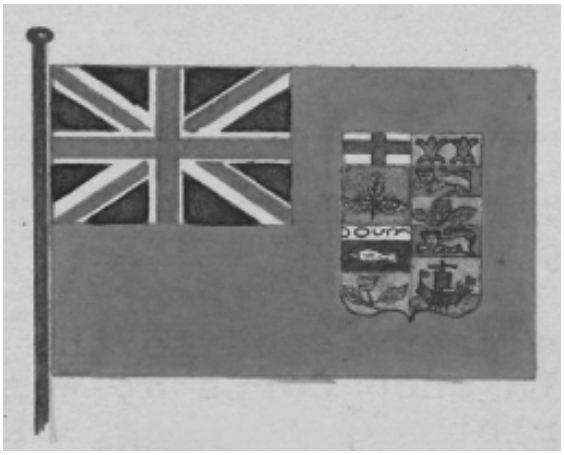
And so, the time passed, until at 6:30 A.M. on the 9th of May, the great Mauritania was docked at Halifax in Nova Scotia in CANADA! The big portals of the dock-shed were packed with expectant relatives and friends of "home comers". As the troops poured out of the ship, Bosdet, Cameron, and I stood together in a quiet place watching them. In the excitement and confusion of getting back they were giving little thought to the separations from mates who would be more than missed later. Every little while we saw disappear a group of our own mates. Cameron perhaps, to see many of them again, but Bosdet in Mexico, and myself in Boston, far less likely to see any of them. Then the "Big 4" (what if there were but three of us in the flesh!) shook hands and parted. Our ways were separated from that moment on.

"Up town" all was confusion as meetings took place and welcoming shouts filled the air. Then, gradually, came the realization that those who lived in the vicinity had gone home, that many more had simply gone off on trains to other places, and the rest of us, strangely alone, were "just waiting" in "just another town" for our own trains. As the late afternoon passed, quietly, we began to realize that friendships formed under fire of battle can become an integral part of one's existence, and that neither time nor physical separation can weaken that bond.

At six o'clock I entrained with the units bound for St. John and points west. All night we rode, getting some sleep while cramped into every conceivable position. Truro is the only stop that I can remember. There, although it was midnight or later, we were greeted by a band and a crowded platform. Sandwiches and hot coffee and doughnuts were served by an excited throng. Many girls were there serving chocolate bars and candy kisses—and a whole lot of kisses that were NOT candy by any means. With my souvenirs is a bunch of dried and discolored Mayflowers which I received from one sweet girl during that short stop at Truro.

At eight o'clock on the morning of the 10th we arrived in St. John, where we found that the government had found a quick way of turning soldiers into civilians... officially. A "welcome" speech, cut short by cries of, "Let's go!", "When do we eat!", "Cut out the guff, and do your stuff!" was followed by a good meal. Then we filed into one door of the armory as gunners, moved along from one counter or window to another, and on out another door, as misters. That was all. We had signed up for "duration of war and six months" and we and Canada had honored the contract. During the afternoon I met many old friends and acquaintances of 1917, who kept me occupied until 5:30 P.M. when, with a few others, I boarded the Boston bound train.

At Dover, New Hampshire, I was greeted by several of my family in a manner that left me feeling fine for the rest of the run to North Station in Boston. At ten o'clock on the 11th I was ducking traffic in an attempt to reach the subway station. An hour later I was in Belmont, hunting for more of my family, who no longer lived in the house I had left in 1917. After splashing about for a few moments, in a heavy downpour, I met a little girl about seven years old. "Do you know Dotty Louise White?", I asked.



"Yes," she answered, "And I know you, too. You are the big brother Clif who went to war." Agreeing with her I asked her to direct me to Dotty's house. This she did in a sure fashion, by taking my hand, and leading me straight to the door at number eighty-nine Townsend Road. I reckon that it was a wet and muddy EX-gunner who dropped a dripping greatcoat and pack in the front hall to receive a warm welcome. I was "at home"—with familiar faces about me—and familiar places, and still more familiar faces not far off. I ought to have been every bit at ease, and supremely content, but I was not. Everyone did his or her part to get the trench kinks out of my system, and to all appearances the operations were successful, but the "kinks" are still there, and there they will always remain, just as all soldiers learn to know.